CHALLENGING A GOD

HENRY ROSCH VANDERBYLL

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CHALLENGING A GOD

BY

Henry Rosch Vanderbyll

Author of "The Great Secret," etc.

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CHALLENGING A GOD

I

CHALLENGING A GOD

Man has known many gods. Some were mighty, others were grouchy; others, again, were revengeful. When new, undeniable facts were discovered about universe * that did not harmonize with man's god-idea, he dismissed the old gentleman, and employed another and more up-to-date one. In fact, whenever man changed his mind for the better, he placed a more efficient and modern ruler at the head of universal business. Not so long ago, a certain civilized race had two world-managers in its employ who engaged in everlasting competition. Which of the two was the mightiest has never been decided. The one whose name was Devil had, to all appearances, a great ability to direct human lives. I believe, however, that he has since fallen in disgrace. Man's intellect has grown.

* There is hardly a word in the English language that fittingly names the All, the bottomless world-depth. I have used the word "universe" without the article whenever I referred to the All, thus suggesting the same generality and boundlessness which, for instance, the word "life" suggests.

Neither does he, to-day, recognize another hell beside his own soul-agony.

There exists a god to-day who is, I believe, working overtime. His efficiency, principles, and morals are sadly in need of improvement. Man is greater than he is. Man advocates principles and ideals in his imperfect life that are totally unknown to this god. Man is an admirer of justice, nobility of character, and beauty of soul and mind. He is a fervent spokesman in favor of freedom and liberty. None of these glorious principles and ideals are known to this god. Perhaps he is acquainted with liberty and freedom. If he is, they are meant to be enjoyed by himself. He does not care to grant such divine favors to his employes.

In view of the extraordinary fact that this ruler's subjects excel their god in sense of beauty, nobility, and justice, I do not hesitate to challenge him. I realize that it requires a great deal of courage to do so. This god, namely, has a powerful helpmate, whose name is "Public Opinion." This second god, "Public Opinion," is the worst enemy of progress, science, and truth. It often tempts a man to be untrue to his convictions. It sometimes keeps him silent when he should speak. Caring more for truth and the soul-progress of humanity than for public opinion, I shall now proceed to send my challenge.

I accuse this god of having felt infinitely bored; of having passed the dreariness of the eternal hours in creating balls of mud and peopling them with beings; of having been, and still being, the whimsical, playful owner of human toys; of having, knowingly, made these toys imperfect, through which imperfection they often suffer unnameable agonies.

I have a score of other accusations in mind, which are less important, however. The reader will see from the above that my chief accusation is — wilful creation. Such behaviour seems, besides cruel, rather incomprehensible to me. I cannot understand why a perfect god should find an excuse to create. Is not perfection all that is and ever can be? Should not the creation indicate and be proof of the imperfection of this god? Why, his perfection amounted to absolute perfection *minus* his creation! Neither can I conceive of perfection existing beside something else. Perfection is necessarily one; perfection cannot be two.

In defense of his extraordinary actions, it is claimed that this god merely created the world and you to manifest his glory. Although I must admit that universe is a treasure-house of beautiful marvels, I cannot be wholly blind to the fact that there is also a great deal of ugliness and imperfection to be found. A more imperfect toy than man is, is hardly imaginable.

Perhaps we would not notice this imperfection, had not a perfect god created man. His very birth is a prediction of his death and destruction. The manifestation of this god's glory is not quite perfect, apparently. It would appear, moreover, that he is intimately acquainted with one of man's most disagreeable faults — vanity.

I asked this god, long ago, to join the ranks of the unemployed. I suppose that I am not taxing my reader's wit too much when I expect him to realize by now that this God is not a real god. No, indeed, he is not real. He does not exist at all: a reason why my challenge is answered by the silence of eternal vastness, only. This creating god is but a creation himself. A mental creation is he, existing in the mind of man. For it so happens that the gods of man are his own creations.

Man erects his god-structure upon a changeable foundation. This foundation is his own mentality,— in the last analysis, perhaps, the degree of development of his own being. This foundation, in turn, is a mixture of ignorance and fear. Existence-ignorance and fear are inseparable. When man's being, intellect, and knowledge develop, the foundation of his god-structure necessarily becomes shaky and craggy. The structure itself crumbles into a pitiful, ri-

diculous heap of thought-ruins. A new foundation is being laid, containing less ignorance and, consequently, less fear. A new god-structure is being erected, resembling thought-architecture a little more correctly and truthfully. And this god-structure is once more the exact expression of man's soul-development.

The Old Testament enjoyed, no doubt, a great reputation about twenty-five centuries ago. It probably contains the best essays written on existence in the year 500 to 100 B. C. If there were no progress of soul and mind, we might still think those essays marvelous and divine. Representing, however, an infinitely higher soul-development than that of thirty centuries ago, we cannot refrain from condemning the ideas and thoughts uttered in this much talked-of book. Our wisdom, naturally, forbids us to condemn the author or the authors of this book. We understand that the authors were not responsible for the development of their own being. We understand that their thoughts and ideas were the necessary expressions of a certain degree of man-development.

Very little sound judgment and common sense are required to realize that the god-structure of the Hebrews cannot possibly harmonize with a modern thought-foundation. The intelligent reader will immediately remark that mentioned

structure contains certain antagonistic, if not repulsive, elements, such as cruelty, deceit, greed, tyranny, immorality, etc.

The friendship between the Hebrews and their god was remarkable. Perhaps it was not friendship, after all. He was more a feared and strictly obeyed leader of a gang of brigands and robbers. The Hebrew's enemy was his enemy. He used his all-powerful might to destroy the foes of Israel. Pestilence, all-destruction, and wholesale-slaughter were his favorite methods of warfare. When his omnipotence failed him, he resorted to deceit and cunning. The cruelty he displayed towards his conquered enemies was immense. He spared neither woman nor man nor babe. He deemed it sometimes necessary to destroy the helpless dumb cows and oxen and asses belonging to the enemy.

In return for his powerful assistance the Hebrews fed this god roast lamb and roast beef. It sometimes happened that a father thought Jehovah to be in a grouchy mood; so he prepared to offer him his son, in the hope that such sacrifice might change his disposition. Little babes were not entirely spurned by this hungry god.

Well, it has probably become clear to my reader that this god was but an expression of a barbarian's being and mentality. The Hebrew

of those days must have been a veritable pig. But again we forgive him. He was not knowingly responsible for his marked non-development.

It is an interesting, if not logical, fact that man builds his god-structure upon a foundation of ignorance and fear. Man is a hero in his earth-kingdom. He is not afraid to investigate the realms of physics and chemistry. He often does not hesitate to undertake vivisectional experiments. He harnesses and commands the power of electricity. He is the courageous king of a visible, tangible, sensible kingdom of mud. Put to him, however, the impertinent little questions: "Why? How? Whence? Whither?" Mention the name of God! Command him to enter the realm of the Infinite! You shall see that his answer is shaped in the form of an excuse. Yes, you shall notice a glimmer of fear in his eye. Very naturally, for he does not KNOW. And is there a greater fear-creating power than not-knowing?

The unexplainable known fills the human heart with fear. I invite my reader for a walk in the still night. The star-studded depths of universe are brooding in silence. Yonder planet, with its calm flow of light, is one of our immediate neighbors — merely several million miles distant. Beyond that planet, several bil-

lion miles distant, rolls our immediate star-neighbor. Beyond this star, infinitely far away, roll other stars. Beyond the latter shine thousands of others. And suppose that we have at last reached the ultimate star; what then? Then there is still infinite space to be reckoned with. It rolls on, rolls on, rolls on . . . until I remember that I am six feet tall, that I weigh 170 pounds, that I shall probably live another forty or fifty years. The rolling-on of infinite space suddenly ceases. And I am ceasing this awful meditation in the still night. For that unexplainable known immensity overshadows my soul with the very essence of fear. I shall be glad to receive any answer to that universal puzzle that can satisfy my mental unrest. Whether it shall satisfy me, naturally depends upon the quality of my mind or my being. But an answer I *must* have, even if the answer should be that there is no answer.

Man has ever invented answers to the problems of existence that satisfied his particular degree of mentality. Many of these answers still live as ancient myths and legends in today's literature. One of the most ingenious and childish explanations of a natural phenomenon was given by the Teutons, more than twenty centuries ago. The thunderstorm was the unexplainable known until a Teuton-genius furnished a satisfactory solution to the prob-

lem. He claimed that their god, Wodan, was rather displeased! His angry frown was distinctly noticeable in the black, towering thunder-clouds. He drove his chariot over the bridge of heaven (the rainbow). One could hear the loud rattle of the vehicle's wheels (the thunder). One could see the sparks of fire fall from his stallions' feet (the lightning). This explanation was satisfactory to the Teuton-mind. Had they been acquainted with the laws of sound, light, and electricity, this explanation of a phenomenon of nature would never have been given.

I do not know who gave that Paradise-solution of the problem of man's origin. It is rather good, I think, considering the fact that it was written several thousand years ago. I do not think it necessary to remark that a man with a twentieth-century-mind does not read it in any other manner than he would a myth.

I begin to realize that the above utterings may be understood to be an attack upon believers of a certain religion. I hasten to deny such accusation. I do not intend to attack any individual, no matter to what creed, belief, or denomination he may be espoused. I do not even wish to crush the belief of the believers who have nothing else to believe. They should have their belief. Their particular soul-development demands it, no doubt. Nay, my argu-

ments are meant for the individual who believes because public opinion and public belief would force him to do so. His belief I condemn! His lack of moral courage I condemn! Him I wish to see free! Free from prejudice, superstition, ignorance, and the selfish motives that induce him to think as others do. I wish to convince him that the claim of authority on matters relating to the secret of existence is an unsurpassed expression of arrogance. For his benefit, I wish to tear down that shaky god-structure, the composition of which is old and worn out. Let me scatter its fragments in the four directions of the winds of heaven! Let me rebuild according to a more modern style! Let me rebuild with the knowledge that some day a more advanced being shall tear down this very structure, and build a better one!

There exists, I am convinced, no higher religion than knowledge. I cannot understand why knowledge should not be preferable to vagaries, superstition, and fanaticism. Knowledge is not arrogant. It does not claim to realize more than it really knows. It courageously admits its ignorance. Infinitely more valuable is one average brain of knowledge than a piety-stricken church-crowd.

To know is to be fearless. To merely partly understand the marvel of your own soul is to be a god. Knowing the laws of human being, you

readily forgive your fellow-man. Knowing the "why" and "how" of everything, you are able to bear pain and misfortune. Knowledge makes you unconquerable.

Spirituality does not consist of begging and worshipping and praising the Lord, as many people would think. To the degree you understand this existence-marvel, to such degree are you spiritual. The spiritual man does not fear or beg or praise. He KNOWS! He has read a few pages from the book of secrets. He is standing on a solid, indestructible rock — immovable, even in an ocean of eternity. This rock is the rock of knowledge. Let the tempest howl, the storm beat: he knows! He is their master: he knows! They cannot affect him: he knows! His being is aglow with the inspiration of living: he knows!

Nay, I never knew a spiritual man to crawl and beg before a whimsical ruler. Piety is an admission of your worthlessness. The spiritual man knows the value of his being. You offer worship in exchange for your master's good behaviour. The spiritual man knows that everything and everybody behaves, provided he, himself, behaves.

I love the man who is aware of the infinite value of his own being. Do not think him conceited. He who knows is unconquerable and yet most humble. He cares little for his self

and its desires. He is brave enough to sacrifice. He is sufficiently unselfish to bear pain and misfortune. He cannot be broken; he cannot be crushed. Why, he is too unselfish, and he knows too much!

From out of the dim haze of the future looms a god: THE KNOWING MAN!!

II

THE POLISHING OF MAN

I never can remember in which year, before or after Christ, a big battle was fought, or a king was born, or a new religion was founded. My lack of interest is, most probably, the cause of my forgetfulness. I care little for the innumerable little happenings of the past. I do not think that history's purpose is to teach us dates and details of murders and conquests. History, as a whole, is teaching us but one thing. And this one thing is not always known to be the most interesting revelation in the records of past events. We are often more interested to know the number of wives and mistresses of King Henry the Eighth than to know that he was a selfish man. That the Catholic Church burned and tortured "unbelievers" is quite remarkable, considering it does not do so to-day. That such deeds were damnable and are unknown to-day, and that something must have happened to change people's viewpoints, is of less interest. Yet is this uninteresting

side of history the most important one. It teaches us that man is subject to growth. And I believe that this simple fact allows us to penetrate a little deeper into the darkness of existence-mystery.

From the reports of biologists, geologists, evolutionists, and philosophers in general, we are able to create a vague mental picture of the ancient man. We watch him roam the forest, unshaven, uncombed, totally ignorant of the existence of Paris garters and lavender socks. His chief business is to hunt for food. Yes, his chief business is to satisfy his self. We stand appalled at his unpolished manners toward the gentle sex. The art of paying compliments to fair womanhood is sadly foreign to him. He actually captures her by sheer brute force. His self desires her; she should be his.

Of this man we can merely remark that he exists. Existence is his only occupation. It is not so much that existence which is a part of one mighty whole-existence. His existence is self-centered, absolutely individual. He, the individual, exists before and above anything or anybody else. Let the stars shine in the sky-depths if they wish! He sees them without being conscious of them. They do not stimulate his thought. His self-absorption envelops him in a veil of darkness that separates him from an outside universe. Of all things and beings

he exists first. The balance of fathomless universe is mere decoration. It very conveniently fills up the remaining void.

From this pit of soul-darkness, man arises slowly as the years roll by. We shall take a long journey on the wings of time, and visit the man of the Middle Ages. We immediately notice that the centuries have wrought a change in the being of man. He is not so intensely absorbed in self. He is actually inclined to take interest in other things beside his self. He even wonders what sort of thing this huge dwelling-place of his may be. He does not know whether to call it flat or round. One daring thinker claims that the earth is round and revolves upon an axis.

Taken as a whole, this man is devoting some of his attention to art, education, and science. He is laying the crude foundations for a present university and laboratory. But although his self-centeredness is markedly less than that of the ancient man, he still considers his self to be the most important factor of existence. We see him play the rôle of king and nobleman. The king's word is law. He who displeases him or disregards his wishes is uncertain of his life. His desire to aggrandize his kingdom must be fulfilled at any cost. What matters the death of thousands of his subjects? Instead of conquering with the iron muscle of yore, he slays

with the spear or with gunpowder; sometimes, also, with reason and intellect.

We see this man play the rôle of priest. He commands the world to obey his word. Let no one obstruct his path! Let no one dare utter a thought or a conviction that might displease him! Torture and persecution are the well deserved penalties of such wickedness.

Unlike the brute man, then, this man of the Middle Ages is finding distraction in an outside universe. He has partly broken through the wall of darkness that envelops intense self-centeredness. He is, consequently, receptive to impression and knowledge. We are glad, however, to hurry away from him. His highly self-centered being expresses itself through intense selfishness or thought of self.

Man of the twentieth century! How favorably does man of to-day compare with his ancestors! His self-centeredness is infinitely less. This fact is revealed by his greater generosity, his broad-mindedness, and his deep knowledge. He busies himself with innumerable things. The isolation-wall of self-absorption is nothing less than a heap of ruins. His being soars the depths of universe. Thought of self has been partly conquered by thought of others and thought of universe. He is not devoting his entire life to his self. Part of it is spent away from self. Were it not for this fact,

he would not be able to make his discoveries about universe. He is receptive to impression and knowing. The man-seed has penetrated through its prison-house of darkness. The man-tree is towering towards the sky, catching the breezes of eternity, making a first attempt to embrace the All.

Is it necessary to furnish the proofs that man of to-day is infinitely less absorbed in self than man of a century ago? I may mention the many charitable institutions, the free schools and hospitals. And what might Nero have thought of a society for preventing cruelty to animals? What would Napoleon have answered to the modern statement that war is a crime? What might the people of two centuries ago have thought about democracy? The noiseless flap of time's wings has wrought an astonishing change in the being of man!

In spite of our many accusations against man, we are compelled to admit that he has been improving continuously. We are forced to speak of a growth in man. He has been guided by the irresistible hand of progress. This is the great fact history is teaching us. It could not possibly reveal a more interesting fact. To know that man's being is growing is to know something about the very secret of existence.

The nature of the growth in man is a pe-

culiar one. It is undeniably the growth of unselfishness. Study your history; you shall find it to be so. Selfishness and generosity, however, are but expressions of man's being. The very soul or being of man has changed in the course of time. There was a time when it was almost completely absorbed in itself. To use a modern expression: it was intensely conscious of self, or self-conscious. I lack the words and the expressions that should convey my meaning. As an illustration, I may mention the rose as being a lovely expression of intense self-consciousness. It is entirely wrapped up in its own existence. It is only aware of the sunbeams, the raindrops, and the night-time, which make up its outside universe. And most probably this awareness is not a realized one.

The intensely self-conscious man of yore was greatly absorbed in his individual existence. His awareness of self, however, was a conscious or realized awareness. It erected an unsurmountable wall between his being and the outside world. We might state that he was not All-conscious. We must not imagine, however, that he could possibly change this attitude of indifference towards the universe. This change could only be effected through the change of his being, which was subject to natural growth.

History, then, teaches that the self-consciousness of man's being has become less in-

tense. This fact is revealed by the growth of unselfishness — an expression of the growth of All-consciousness. We are liable to pay little attention to this peculiar growth in man. We take it as a matter of fact. We speak of progress and civilization, as if such things were not remarkable. Civilization, however, is but a visible expression of man's being. Yes, it ultimately depends upon the degree of self-consciousness of the individual's being. A high degree of civilization belongs to a high degree of soul-development. I do not take this growth and development of man's being as a matter of fact. It is highly astonishing and interesting. It is one of the most important hints given us to solve another part of the immense secret.

We, to-day, may be quite satisfied with the high degree of development of man's being. This does not prevent it from growing. Looking around in our life of to-day, we must admit that it is thickly strewn with expressions of deep self-consciousness. Let us be truthful about it! It is wise and generous to admit our own imperfection. It is foolish and selfish to refuse to notice it.

Man, to-day, is still greatly absorbed in self. I may mention here that this self-consciousness *is* human existence itself. Were it not for this fundamental quality of man's being, we should not be here writing about him. But there exist

degrees of self-consciousness. A low degree belongs to the brute man's being; a higher degree to the noble individual. To-day there still exist expressions of a low degree of man-development. A few of these expressions are vanity, ignorance, orthodoxy, injustice, greed, graft, murder, war, etc. Democracy, as a form of government, is the highest expression known of advanced soul-development. Broadmindedness, generosity, universal knowledge are other such expressions.

That man is primarily aware of, and absorbed in, self is easily discovered by studying our own being. I have often wondered where the haunts of sorrow might be located. I have come to the extraordinary conclusion that both sorrow and happiness dwell under the same roof. I have asked myself the simple questions: "Who is sorrowful? Who is happy?" The answer is: "I am." One cannot deny the fact that sorrow finds its birth in "me," that self-centered something that constitutes man's being. The causes of our sufferings are, to all appearances, outside influences, happenings, and conditions. Is it not remarkable, however, that one individual is crushed, another strengthened and purified, by the same sorrowful experience? If outside influences, then, assault us, their effect is nevertheless determined by the quality of our being. The flame cannot have its destruc-

tive effect without an object upon which to act. A piece of paper is affected by a burning match; a stone is not. The quality of the object acted upon is of as much importance as the flame itself.

All sorrow is caused by loss. When I ardently desire possession or the realization of a wish, I am liable to suffer if my desire is not fulfilled. In my ignorance I may curse myself and the world. I may wonder why a Supreme Being did not grant my request. I may think this earth a miserable dwelling-place for man. But the world moves on as silently as ever; the sun rises and sets as it did yesterday; life's business proceeds in the same regular manner. Nothing is being affected except my "me," my self. The disturbance is purely local. That awareness of self, that self-consciousness, is really the cause of my sorrow. I cannot conscientiously accuse a god, or my fellow-man, of being the author of my mental pain. If I am honest with myself, I shall admit that, in last analysis, the quality of my own being determines the disastrous effect of sorrow.

That which is painful to you may not be painful to me. Different qualities of being expressing different desires, your loss may not be a loss in my opinion. But each individual is liable to lose, or be disappointed in, something. The intensity of our pain is determined by our

degree of selfishness; ultimately, by the degree of self-consciousness of our being.

Should we surround our impressive being with a wall of ice-cold indifference? Should we be altogether feelingless? I do not think this possible. But even if it were possible, we would not destroy our selfishness. No man ever has, or ever will, evolve beyond sorrow or pain. Even a Christ emptied a sorrow-filled soul when he uttered these words: "Lord, my Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But man may evolve to a degree of being that enables him to *bear* pain. The unselfish man is capable of bearing sorrow. The intensely self-conscious man, who values his own being above anything or anybody else, is the one who weeps and whines when disaster overtakes him. The unselfish man "grins and bears." We should not pay too much attention to the ever-crying voice of our "ME." We should not sympathize too much with our self. Such attitude will prevent us from conquering.

It is a peculiar fact that man never searches his own being for the solution of an existence-problem. I consider it my special duty to acquaint him, through the pages of this little book, with the almost incomprehensible value of his being. It is a powerful cause. It answers many a pertinent question relating to the great

secret. How powerful man's being is, I actually dare not utter in so many words.

I realize the hopelessness of asking a Supreme Being to enlighten me on subjects relative to the mystery of existence. The only answer I ever received was the silence of fathomless universe. I received my knowledge through observation and, principally, through studying my own being. That existence is such a complete mystery is partly due to man's tendency to seek the cause of certain effects in the depths of the heavens. He is ever groping in the clouds and the imagined, but unknown, realms of a Supreme Ruler. I advise him to begin his study with his self. The results might be startling.

III

MAN AND UNIVERSE AS PERCEIVER OR CONSCIOUSNESS

I know of no more puzzling, astonishing something than the " me " that moves the body of man. I am inclined to believe that altogether too much attention has been paid to that automaton of flesh and blood — man's physical appearance. The thinker of thoughts, the receiver of impressions, the perceiver of objects, the dreamer of dreams, the self-centered, self-conscious me has been shamefully ignored. Having discovered the self-loving quality of this me, let us see what other business it has in this universe.

I must yet find two people who receive the same impression from that orderly chaos, visible universe. True, we do not *see* objects and beings differently, but we *feel* them differently. We are *impressed* differently by them. We are in a different manner conscious of them.

Although that glorious heap of things that make up visible universe remains forever fixed in form and shade, its *impression* upon the indi-

vidual may be changeable. Why, even the most carefree and thoughtless man admits that one should smile in order to see that smile reflected upon the world. The most simple-minded creature will hear the world sob in answer to the cry of grief in his own heart. Whence that changeability of impression-power with which universe appears to be endowed? Surely a rose is ever a rose, a star is ever a star, the world is ever the world. The luminous glory of Venus is the same to-day as it was yesterday. The perfume of the rose shall not be sweeter to-morrow than it is at present. But it would appear that that subtle, incomprehensible me, peeping through or from behind its appearance of form and flesh-color, is capable of *feeling*, *perceiving* universe to-day in this manner, to-morrow in a different one. Although the same flower-covered earth, the same star-filled universe, confront the individual, he may yet *feel* them differently at different moments. Still more astonishing is the fact that each individual carries his own individual impression of the world in his heart. One would almost be inclined to state that universe does not lie unfurled *without* the bodily observation-tower of the human me, but that it exists *within me*, and is hued by its individual colors.

I have often wished that I might be able to change my me or personality, be it only for a

few moments, into that of others. I might then see — nay, not see, but feel, be conscious of — the world in the same manner as other individuals are conscious of it. Existence would then, no doubt, be a wonderful revelation! We might then, perhaps, comprehend more clearly the why and how of all that is.

There is but one universe to be *seen*, but there are as many universes to be *felt*, *perceived*, as there are human beings to feel or perceive it. There is, for instance, the man whose chief ambition is to satisfy the selfish clamor of self. He is sometimes known by the name of materialist, and is generally styled the selfish man. Walking through the still night, he may see the stars above his head, but he is barely conscious of them. No mysterious, beautiful globes roll through infinite depths for him! Nothing rolls — except his silver, shining dollar. There is music in the air of night. The trees rustle, the leaves and the flowers lisp an incomparable lullaby. Yet does this individual walk in this immensity of unnamable beauty — deaf to all sound, unconscious of the musical breath of slumbering earth. No tender, soul-stirring music exists for him — except the ringing of the golden coin, except the noisy brass-band of his selfish me! What should he know, this man, about existence, universe or God? In order to gain knowledge, one should pave the way by

thinking. And all his thought is centered in his self, and all existence is rooted in himself, and all the universe is reduced to the pin-point of his selfish self!

Yes, there exists *a* universe for this individual, — *his* universe, in fact. The world does not really exist without, but within, the limits of his self. As he is, thus is the world. Universe has a certain value, a significance, solely reserved for him, for the reason that his personality, or consciousness, or me is what it is. It was Schopenhauer who taught the world that everything exists as an IDEA in the soul of man!

There is the individual known to us as the poet-philosopher. I do not refer to the so-called poet whose world is sugar-sweet and whose heart is inflamed with vaudeville-courage. I am hinting at the man who is a poet as a consequence of his deep insight into the marvel of existence — a man like Emerson, for example. The being of such a man differs widely from that of the materialist or selfish man. The poet-philosopher is altogether less self-centered. On the whole, his attention is diverted from his self. His being is not so thickly wrapped in the cloak of self-absorption. It is, consequently, receptive to knowledge and impression. There is the mystery of the All to be unravelled! There is the beauty of the world to be felt and analyzed! Many things have their being be-

side his self. There is struggling humanity, for instance. His fellow-man is ignorant of some of the laws of life that have been revealed to him. He must teach them — how to live, how to conquer misery, how to be happy in this world of marvel and mystery. What a beauteous world, this world of *his!* If there exists a god to him, his name spells beauty. If his god has attributes, they are power, wisdom, and universality, which attributes are beautiful in themselves. Beauty, wherever his eye may roam! Wild beauty in the roar of the tempestuous ocean; rugged, rough beauty in the boulder-strewn mountain-wilderness; tender, sad beauty in the soul-wrung composition of a Chopin; pure beauty in the sun-kissed lily; divine, unspeakable beauty in the soul that climbs from out of the depths of ignorance, sin, and sorrow into the light of knowing and contentment!

Indeed, there exists a paradise-hued universe to this individual. It is altogether different from that of which the materialist is conscious. Is universe itself the cause of this extraordinary fact? Seek the answer in the being of man! Find the solution of many a life-problem in man himself! When at last you turn disgustedly from the fathomless world-depth that ever answers with a mocking silence, you are compelled to study your self. In your self, in

your me, slumbers many a secret answer. And this poet-philosopher is conscious of a beautiful universe because his being represents a certain quality of soul-development that is the cause of a distinctly marked impression. He, himself, is beauty, and this beauty reflects upon the world perceived. Universe, in fact, exists as a beautiful IDEA in his soul or consciousness.

There exist, then, as many universes as there are human beings. As I am, thus is the world. Universe exists as an idea in my conscious being.

In view of the above, we are not surprised to find our universe to be a changeable, moody immensity. Well I remember those days when the voice of my self was constantly ringing in my ears. I selfishly cursed my ill-luck. I selfishly condemned those who apparently obstructed my path of progress. I selfishly sympathized with my self, and consequently wrapped myself in a cloak of bitterness and melancholy. Universe? Life? The world? My own bitterness and sadness reflected upon the world. This was indeed a sad, hopeless existence! Man was indeed a selfish, heartless brute! Yes, all this was truly so. As I am in being, thus is the world without. My self-love, moreover, prevented me from knowing. There was nothing to know but the selfish demands of my self. I was shut out from the realm of uni-

versal knowing. I was ignorant; not wise, not spiritual.

This self-love, the expression of self-consciousness, is the key to the life-hieroglyphics of existence. It explains everything except, perhaps, the beginning and the end which in all probability do not exist. Were it not for self-consciousness, material universe would not exist. There would be a vast ocean of All-consciousness, which does not express itself in limited, material form and therefore would appear as nothingness to self-conscious man.

And what about the rest of the universe? Have we summed up our conclusions about universal existence when we say that man is self-conscious being and the rest of universe is made up of things, just things? I sometimes wonder what unnamable conceit prompted man to draw a line of absolute distinction between himself and the balance of the All. Why is he *totally* different from the rest of God's beings? His self-love, perhaps, caused him to look at things in that manner. Perhaps it was the fact that *a* difference exists between him and the other inmates of universe that made him blind to the truth that he is merely the most sublime edition of creation.

I am not aware of an absolute separation between my own being and the more humble and undeveloped ones of universe. I can notice but

a difference of degree. I recognize my self in the rigid rock, the nodding flower, the fluttering bird. That is to say, I find my own unfavorable elemental qualities intensified in beast, and plant, and even mineral; I am aware of a total or partial absence of man's sublimer qualities in them.

The solid rock, for example, speaks volumes of life-knowledge to me. The rock, or perhaps each of its particles, is a visible expression of intense self-consciousness. The atoms of the stone are so absorbed in self that even a sledge-hammer does not make any impression upon the stone. The stone does not move unless I kick it sufficiently hard. The "me" of the stone-molecule is plunged in total darkness. We say that the stone is lifeless, even as we sometimes remark about an individual that he is "dead."

Then there is the fragrant rose. What lovely expression of intense self-consciousness that flower is! Why, it does not even toil, neither does it spin. It grows and blooms wherever the invisible hand of universe may plant it. Its chief business in this world is to draw the nourishing essence from its little root-entangled earth-bed; to lift up its innocent petal-face to the vitalizing rays of the sun. It is almost completely absorbed in self. Not as completely as the stone, however! There are many indications pointing at the fact that the

flower is vaguely conscious of an outside world. It dies, for instance, when bereft of food and sunshine. From a shadowed dwelling-place it bends and grows in the direction of the falling sunbeams. Nay, I even have noticed that the flower is dimly aware of the presence of human beings! Impression, I am convinced, stirs the being of the flower. This impression is probably so vague and so simple in its effect that we, who are literally besieged by conscious and unconscious, stormy and peaceful, impressions, do not dream of its existence. It should, moreover, be an unconscious impression, for the flower is far below the stage of man-being, which is particularly characterized by the individual's awareness of his own consciousness. The flower, then, is not conscious of being conscious.

Close observation made me conclude that different people affect the flower in a different manner. The selfish or morose person cannot "keep" cut flowers for as long a period as the strong, cheerful individual can. It would seem that the flower is impressed (probably not consciously) by the quality of the selfish person's being. As a consequence thereof it quickly droops its head and fades away. The being of the noble, unselfish, cheerful man, however, impresses the flower in such a manner that its life is prolonged.

What an interesting something — the being, or soul, of man! What a glorious world, this huge dwelling-place of ours! Full of interest and marvel, indeed! I have no desire to exchange it for a heaven of eternal bliss. I should feel infinitely bored. I should long for my earthly trials and my beautiful paradise of universe. A heaven is a fit abode for a sleepy, tired, discouraged individual, anyway.

The flower, then, is a little less absorbed in self than the rock is, and it consequently manifests a certain amount of freedom. There is growth; there is life. There is not that stony, death-like attitude towards the outside world. There is a glimmer of light in the flower, be it an ever so faint a one.

Then there is the animal. What a beautifully savage expression of intense self-consciousness is the king of animals, for example! Also *his* chief occupation in this world is the satisfying of self. Also he is intensely self-conscious. His life is spent in preying on his victim that must furnish him his food, and in comfortably snoozing in a corner of his den. Yet is the animal less absorbed in self than the plant is. It is to a greater degree conscious of the All. It consequently enjoys a greater freedom. It actually moves about at will, while the plant, as a rule, flourishes on the spot of birth. It is, moreover, master over the plant, while the plant,

in turn, is master over the mineral. It is not fate that orders the cow to eat the grass of the meadow. The plant, being more intensely absorbed in self than the animal, enjoys less freedom and is the latter's slave. And in human life we shall see that the man who is least wrapped up in self enjoys the greatest freedom and is mentally and morally master among men.

The least self-absorbed being in universe is man. Being infinitely less self-centered than the animal, the plant, and the mineral, he is their master. He is, moreover, more receptive to impression, and, as a consequence thereof, his own possibility of becoming All-knowing. The All is partly known to him. There is no death-like darkness surrounding him. There is no bondage of utter self-absorption limiting him to a condition of slavery. He is the ruler of physical nature.

Needless to say that there are several degrees of man-being. The sweetly self-conscious rose, for instance, is to be found among the fair maidens of this earth. We know her, the carefree woman-child of luxury. Her business in life is to lift her innocent face to the sunshine-rays of comfort and pleasure. She drinks the self-nourishing essence of ease and happiness. She unconsciously cherishes and caresses her self. Little does she dream that there is a mighty universe scheming and moving about

her; that there is a humanity struggling for light and conquest of sorrow; that there is an invisible power weaving the web of her future; until one unexpected day a cruel blow from life startles her from her rosy dream. Then she wonders why. Her little head fades and droops. Another rose has known of bloom and fragrance.

Also the beautifully savage expression of intense self-consciousness like that of a tiger or a lion is to be found among men. We shall find it in a Napoleon, in an individual bent on material conquest. He spares neither his own nor his enemy's soldiers in his turbulent rush for might and power. Nobody and nothing must obstruct his bloody path. No human or other voice sounds louder than that of his self. Somber and fierce his appearance, hard and determined his expression, black and gloomy his self; he stands on the battlefield of earth, shut out from the realms of All-knowing. An impenetrable fog of self-love, blood, and bullets surrounds him, until a Waterloo and subsequent exile divert his attention from self to an outside universe which is apparently governed by strange and incomprehensible laws. Indeed, a Waterloo within the soul of the self-loving creature is an angel in bloody disguise that shows the road leading to unselfishness and understanding.

The highest type of man is he who does not listen principally to the voice of his self. Such man is a master-mind, a powerful hero. He is not a master-mind for the sake of self. He is not the type of hero who kills his fellow-man in the roaring battle. Not being held in bondage by the ever-crying voice of self, his freedom allows him to rule mentally and morally. He is the pioneer of the generation to come, sometimes the herald of an as yet unborn race. His understanding, and, above all, his unselfishness, make him unconquerable and fearless. His self is not the principal factor of universe, and pain and sorrow are bearable. A humanity, nay, an entire fathomless universe exist beside his self. Forward! Defeat is not known to him. There is no self to be wounded or pleased.

Whether Jesus of Nazareth be a product of fiction, or whether he be a reality of mankind's history, matters little to me. Of this much I am convinced, that the least self-conscious being on earth is a Christ. Such a being is no longer self. He has become one with the All. He knows all there is to know. Why, he is God himself!

IV

MAN AND MATERIAL UNIVERSE AS FATE

It is with some hesitation that I undertake to write the following chapter. Not because I am not convinced of the truth of its statements, but because *individual experience* only can bring us the realization of that truth. There is, indeed, a great difference between accepting and realizing a truth. Someone may tell me that smoking is injurious to my health. I may accept his statement as truth without *realizing* its truth. Only individual experience, teaching me that the use of nicotine is bad for me, can make me realize that fact. And thus I may repeat a philosophy of life which I know by hearsay and merely accept because it sounds logical or plausible. I may, on the other hand, advocate the same philosophy for the reason that individual experience caused me to realize its truth. In the first instance I imitate the parrot that jabbers away, knowing not of what it is talking; in the second case, the truth of such philosophy has come to me as a revelation:

I fully *realize* it, I *know* it. A revelation is the realization of a truth that formerly belonged to the realm of the unknown. The following statements, then, should be realized by the individual. They should be the word-expressions of the reader's unuttered knowledge.

It is rather unlike man's inquisitive nature not to study the origin and the attributes of that grim and merciless pirate of universe known to him as "fate." He has reigned supreme, this cruel tyrant, since the birth of man, and never has his victim even attempted to unmask him or resist him. Invisible to mortal eye, this dreaded enemy reveals his existence by the effects of his blow. And while man is ever ready to clamor for his "rights," his "liberty," his "freedom," in social life, he sheepishly accepts the lashes from the czar of universe, and merely sighs: "It is the hand of Fate." Indeed! A sorrowful mess, then, this creation of the All-Wise! A miserable execution of the eternal symphony, this life-music of ours! Rather discouraging, I should say, that the tender strain of life's fantasy should be so unexpectedly interrupted by an impromptu of fate. One does not mind so much the fact that the potter amused himself by moulding pots. But to be a disfigured pot, cracked and coarse and ugly; to be surrounded by calamity and fate —

that cannot arouse a fervent admiration for the potter's ability and goodwill!

It is not uninteresting to observe, however, that there are those who overflow with "worship" and "boundless love" for the grim old gentleman — principally because they are aware of his all-crushing might, I wager. Or perhaps their me is crying for health, wealth, and prosperity. However, this should be none of my affairs, provided such attitude be the cause of their happiness.

I have, thus far, attempted to show that man's real being is a certain degree of self-consciousness. Self-love is but the natural expression of self-consciousness. The latter attribute, moreover, is the receiver of all conscious and unconscious impressions, and the source of all sorrow and happiness. The fact that the degree of our self-love is solely responsible for the intensity of our sorrow, and the fact that a silencing of this self-love lessens the consuming power of pain — these facts, I am happy to say, clear the record of the Supreme One of many an alleged crime. One monstrous accusation still remains, however: He is the author of that demon-power, fate. We shall now endeavor to prove that fate, also, is not one of the Almighty's destructive tools.

No more interesting study can absorb the mind of man than the study of his self. It is

often puzzling and surprising to watch this self change its position and its surroundings in this life-labyrinth, guided, apparently, by the invisible hand of fate. It is inspiring, nay, encouraging, to find a reason for this change. One of the first conclusions the average thinking man must draw from his observations is, that there exist as many fates as there exist human beings. How well known this truth is! And yet what little value has been given this startling discovery! Innumerable truths about this marvelous me of man are the property of the public mind — as boasting gossip, perhaps, and not as realized truth. For in spite of the fact that these truths are being gossiped about, are being advanced, often, as a kind of philosophical fad, it would appear that man is yet inclined to seek the essence of universal truth in childish vagaries, fear-created religions, and fanaticism. The mysterious and the supernatural, I believe, must necessarily appeal to the ignorant man as the only answers to the mystery of *his* particular universe.

Individual experience caused me to realize that I am my own fate. When I first awoke from the rosy dream of childhood, well-meaning people planned a future life for me. I should become a banker, they said. I should spend my days in a dusty office, signing checks and drafts; carefully balancing my mind and soul

in a universe of infinite beauty and marvel; cultivating a profit-and-loss conception of life, God, and heaven. Rather a cruel arrangement to make for an incorrigible idealist and dreamer!

I am still unspeakably thankful that merciless fate administered me a blow that planted me, penniless, homeless, and friendless, in the heart of the American prairies. My being, knowing its own nature, its own qualities, and, therefore, its own ambitions, had advised me to spend my days in studying the depths of life's marvel. I had preferred to listen to this irresistible voice rather than to the scratching sound of check-signing pens. Subsequent poverty and struggle were effects of a known cause — my self. They were, moreover, inspirations that revealed many a treasure-house of knowledge. That knowledge and that experience came in response to a demand made by — my self. No man who is not acquainted with all sides of life — with the monotonous, soul-sapping flim-flam of luxurious society and the inspiring cry of life's battlefield, " fight and conquer "—no man, I say, who has not experienced life as a whole, is in a position to teach people about it. A pity-arousing thought, that of a silk-hat-domed and patent-leather-shoed preacher drifting on the contents of the Bible and the fat income derived therefrom, teaching people

about life! What does he know of the many temptations with which a poverty-stricken human brute is surrounded? What does he know of the origin of sin, and the comparative ease of committing it in spite of sermons and moral warnings? Better sin and suffer, and then with a realization in your soul teach your brother, than to be good and saintly, and parade with moral teachings which you do not realize and of which you know nothing.

Was it fate that guided me to the prairies, poverty, and struggle? Was it fate that taught me in such manner about the laws of life and universe? Had I offered my banker's future to a man guided by ambitions for financial success, his pen would still be scratching signatures on checks — not, I am convinced, because fate had compelled him to do so; but because his being is what it is, and its quality demanded particular life-conditions.

I would call this strange law that guides the human being the law of individual fate. It is difficult to define this law in so many words. It is not even easily discovered, because the average individual is not yet conscious of its complicated operations. It operates in spite of our knowledge of it. The only thing needed for the activity of the law of individual fate is an individual. The individual himself is that law. Fate without a being to act upon is un-

thinkable. Fate and the individual are necessarily one. The actions of fate will be in harmony with the soul-quality, the degree of development or self-consciousness of the individual me. Although our natural skepticism would tempt us to ridicule this theory of individual fate, we are yet vaguely aware of the existence of such power. Even the slang-filled mouth of the Broadway loafer unconsciously utters a volume of wisdom when it says: "He got what was coming to him." Something happened to the object of his comment; something natural, apparently; something that *should* have happened to him; something that could only have happened to that particular individual, because his being, his me, is what it is.

We study our fellow-man; we try to discover his soul-qualities, his generosity or selfishness, his faith or weakness, his ambition or laziness. And we come to a certain conclusion regarding his fate. His fate should be thus and such, because the quality of his being is so and so. Nor can we think of an intensely self-absorbed being, satisfying the cry of his self with liquor and base passions, becoming the president of the United States.

Simple, is it not, this law of individual fate? Not only simple, but encouraging. We do not now see the need of heaping all responsibility for our fatal and wicked actions on the in-

visible shoulders of an unknown god. We are spared the disheartening duty of accusing a Supreme Being of wilful meanness. Our being, with its good and bad qualities, its experienced knowledge and its lack of knowledge, is fate. It acts like a magnet, drawing itself into conditions and surroundings, calling forth blows and blessings, that are essential to its growth. This growth, as stated elsewhere, is the growth of All-consciousness — the only development known in material universe. What self-consciousness loses in degree, All-consciousness gains. An expression of this gain is an increase in knowledge or All-knowing, and a decrease in ignorance and selfishness. When man's being has developed to a certain point, he is partly conscious of the fact that it is its own fate. The average man does not realize this, however. He therefore attributes the cause of his hither and thither thrown life to the whimsical nature of a god or a fatal power, which god and fatal power exist in separation from his own being.

It is impossible for me to know myself in absolute separation from that beautiful universe of ours. I am aware of an invisible tie binding me to All that is and making man and universe one. Comparing myself with the other beings of universe, I observe no difference but one of DEGREE in being. I am aware of in-

tensified qualities of darkness here, and increased brilliancy of light elsewhere. Laws and principles, I am satisfied, do not govern the being of man only. They direct the being of the flower, the molecule, and the electron. The very same laws that govern man's being govern all beings and so-called things. There is a difference in action, only; which difference is one of DEGREE, and depends upon the quality or development of the being. Which law, for instance, commands an atom of oxygen to combine with two atoms of hydrogen? Why does this chemical action take place *invariably?* That law, I should say, is the law of individual fate. I cannot imagine a voice, existing separate from and beyond the being-sphere of the atom, commanding it to go into partnership with two other atoms. The voice is the atom itself, the being of the atom. It is because the being of the atom of hydrogen is what it is, and the being of the oxygen-atom is what it is, that the above-mentioned chemical action takes place. Each atom is its own fate!

That profound thinker whose being has indeed reached a rare degree of All-consciousness, Professor Edgar Lucien Larkin, in speaking of the world of atoms and electrons, uttered the following words of wisdom: "All is mind, all is life, even the electron." Different expressions need not necessarily be the expressions of

different ideas. Moreover, a hundred different expressions are often inadequate to utter a truth about the realm of the unseen. The word "mind," I believe, is rather deceptive. One might be inclined to fancy an infinitesimal brain scheming and thinking in an atom of hydrogen. The atom, for instance, does not reason with itself as follows: "Now I will call a pal, and combine with that oxygen fellow." There is no question whatever of a reasoning, arguing, or thinking process. The atom is being guided by the magnetic power of its being, its consciousness. Its actions are automatic. It is not aware of being conscious. Its movements through universe are unknown to itself. This automatic action, this individual fate, is the guiding power of all "things" and beings that build up universe. It is the guiding power of the electron, the atom, the flower, the animal, and the human being. The less absorbed in self the being is, the greater the number and the variety of happenings it, itself, harbors as possibilities. Even the average man of to-day is barely conscious of the fatal power of his own personality. True, he is beginning to courageously admit that his own being has *some* creative value; that it is the cause of at least a few effects. But his theories are "interesting talk," "something new," more than realized truth. People are still inclined to seek

the author of their fate in a power existing in separation from their own being. This, I should think, is a natural inclination. All answers to questions, however, shall ultimately be found in the being of the questioner. My own soul has sent out its cries of agony through the depths of the world, accusing a Supreme Being: "Thou didst that to me!" He never denied or admitted his guilt. The only answer I received was the eternal silence of the All.

A study of one's self may be the cause of infinite satisfaction. The man who realizes that his carelessness — and not fate or God — may be the cause of a possible fall is a wise man. The man who knows that certain dark spots and imperfect qualities of his Being are, and may be, the cause of disagreeable happenings and circumstances meeting him is a master-mind in embryo. And he who knows that he, himself, is fate; that he shall reap as he has sown; that by perfecting his being, his fate shall become more perfect — such man is the unconquerable creator of his own successful life!

V

FATE AND THE GREAT EUROPEAN WAR

While I am writing these lines, "fate" is swooping down upon the European continent, covering it with a shroud of blood and bullets and agony. It may not be uninteresting to investigate the cause of this wholesale butchery, and to determine what part individual fate is playing in this universal calamity. Indeed, this war is a subject worthy of discussion. As an event in the history of mankind it stands in importance and magnitude next to the insubordination of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Its possible consequences are incalculable. The "fate" of many a king and emperor is undergoing a decided change. The foundation of many a youthful nation is being strengthened. The dream of many a humanity-lover is adopting the shape of an etherial possibility.

Many are the explanations given for the forthcoming of this catastrophe. Servia, Austria, Russia, Germany, France, and England are in turn being accused of having lit the fuse

of the bomb of war. No two opinions are alike. But the real cause of this world-misery, I believe, has not been discovered. Nor is it being realized that this war is the inevitable effect of an inevitable cause.

My wholehearted indignation was aroused by the fact that a czar or an emperor commanded his soldiers to pray to God for victory of arms. Of what sort of a god are these individuals conscious, anyway? I should think that they are either ignorant, superstitious self-lovers, or else that they know better, and use a hypocritical god-idea as a means to inspire their subjects to kill their fellow-men. I have no patience with such imperial behaviour. It is simply damnable, and as repulsively criminal as can be imagined. Better know of the Devil, and kill on one's own responsibility, than solicit the approval of a creator and make him the author of a world-crime!

I give my whole-souled sympathy and pity to those who in all sincerity beg of God to avert the continuation of this war. And he who does so for the sake of being good and pious in the eyes of the public is in need of even more than human sympathy and pity.

It is pitiful, indeed, that man in the year 1914 is not endowed with a little more common sense. It would appear that God has no intention whatever of halting the bloodthirsty armies of

Europe. Why did he, the Almighty One, allow them to clash in the first place? Principally, I believe, because he has nothing to do with the whole miserable affair and knows absolutely nothing of it.

Now let us try, aided by a little common sense, to determine who or what is responsible for the great European war.

The observation power of a horse or a cow is needed to realize that the ruin of a window is caused by a stone hurled in the latter's direction. The stone, indeed, did it. A little more intelligence is needed to trace the power that hurled the stone. And a certain amount of wisdom is required to understand and know the cause that prompted that power to hurl the stone.

The many stones that smashed the windows of Europe's peace-palace are being discussed with great fervor and animosity. And the powers that hurled these stones are vaguely known to the public. But the primary cause that set these powers in motion is absolutely unknown to the world, because humanity is as yet not blessed with life-knowledge.

The average soul-development of Europe's inhabitants is about half a century behind the 1914-mark. We have already seen that the growth in man is the growth of individual unselfishness and All-knowing — an expression of

a greater degree of All-consciousness. One must have lived in the United States and Europe both, in order to be able to notice the important superiority of the American being above the European. The me of Europe's individuals, and especially that of its rulers, is a lover of self, to such an extent, indeed, that it either humors or disgusts the universal, broadminded, generous American.

To what extent thought of self is ruling the masses of Europe, one who has not lived the European life can scarcely comprehend. Sufficiently foolish and antique appears the position of czar and kaiser to the average twentieth-century-mind, I presume. What, indeed, is a king that he should be clothed in ermine and purple; that he should rule and command; that he should voice a public sentiment which is not the expression of the public? He is, no doubt, a relic of ancient tyranny and barbarism; a vague reminder of the past, when people were sufficiently developed to be slaves.

Extraordinary that clothes, outward appearance, life's false and gaudy show, should overawe the public! A priest demands respect, and sometimes fear — not because he is what he is, but for the reason that he wears his solemn, black attire. A policeman is an authority-inspiring being on account of his uniform, while his soul-value may not amount

to a row of pins. And a king! Who is not impressed by the crown, the sword, the throne, the army, the palace of a king!

Kings and emperors are working overtime. They play an entirely superfluous part in the world's business. Their presence belongs to the scenes of the Middle Ages. In those days the me of man was a greater lover of self, and totally ignorant of the supreme principle of the universe: individual liberty. Should one be surprised to see "fate" swoop down one of these days, and sweep throne and crown into oblivion? No, I suppose.

What horrifying expression of self-love is a government of Russia! How miserably absorbed in self are the rulers and the mighty of that slav empire! Almost inconceivably so, in the opinion of the generous mind! And what is the meaning of the existence of innumerable class-distinctions in Europe? We know of old nobility, new nobility, wealthy classes, middle classes, working classes, common classes, and the "canaille," or "peuple," or scum of humanity. A member of the new nobility is not fit to be touched by a descendant from an old noble house. A middle class man is unworthy of the attention from a wealthy man. The workingman is a slave in every respect. A member of the "masses" should ever be ready to apologize for his existence.

What causes such miserable expressions of brotherly love, you ask? Seek the answer in the me of man. The European individual is, in comparison with the American, extremely absorbed in self. The voice of his self is to such a degree all-predominant that he satisfies himself at the expense of his fellow-man. He expresses the self-centeredness of his being through a selfish narrowmindedness. He tramples on his less fortunate brother. His being is barred from All-knowing; he is, consequently, ignorant of the laws of life and existence. In short, the European soul has not unfolded to the degree of development attained by the American soul. Should one be surprised to see "fate" deal a blow to the European man that shall furnish him the experience needed for the discovery of another tip of truth's garment?

The average European soul, then, by being in quality behind the signs of the times, is inviting progress or growth to interfere. And never knew we progress but it walked over destruction. It destroys the old, and upon the sepulchre of the old it builds a better new. Yesterday's death is to-day's birth. This is true whenever we can possibly speak of growth. Such war as is now raging in Europe takes place in miniature in the soul of man. Whenever my being is on the verge of growth, and my

habits and actions do not reach the degree of sublimity demanded by the quality of my soul, a revolution is bound to shake the very foundations of my self. Sorrow, pain, and struggle assault me. Not understanding the cause of my sufferings, I may resent my misery and consequently intensify my pain. In the end, however, no matter how long my struggle may have lasted, a new me shall arise from the ruins of my former self; a new me, with greater experience, greater wisdom, less love of self — in short, a better me.

History teaches us that a French Revolution built a more tolerable, a better France on the blood-drenched grave of an unbearable, utterly selfish France. A study of our earth reveals the fact that a huge but coarser fauna and flora were gradually annihilated by calamity and disaster, by floods and storms. A new and higher order of vegetation and animal life took their place in existence. The Canadian Rockies, for instance, have been the silent witnesses of the disastrous proceedings of progress. At their feet rolled immense forests of tropical vegetation; then the oceans leaped the continental barriers and covered this immensity of trees — yes, totally annihilated the old. To-day, the rich soil of the Canadian prairies covers vast beds of coal remains, proving the existence of a past, a "some time," a "some-

where." To-day, the country born from destruction promises to become the cradle of a mighty nation. Strange, the ways of fate! But very often rather suitable to our taste and demands, I should think.

In that country beyond the Atlantic, then, human beings are not living up to the principles of truth that are now the property of this planet. A century ago, these principles were unknown to the then less developed souls. People lived up to a less sublime ideal, which was neverless *the* ideal of a less advanced humanity. The irresistible hand of progress, invited by millions of human beings collectively, is playing fearful havoc among Europe's population. The old is being destroyed. The better new shall emerge from the ruins of the old. Emperors and kings shall mourn their lost glory and power. Individual tyranny shall slowly retreat before the people's voice. Intense thought of self shall lose what individual liberty shall gain. A spiritually and mentally better world shall emerge from the smoke of ruin and gunpowder. This is the LAW — which God nor priest nor saint can alter! This is the LAW that operates at the unuttered command of the individual. Nay, this law *is* the individual; it is YOU!

Utter not your prayers to a god who is totally ignorant of the conditions that prevail

in Europe. Do not hold him responsible for this calamity, nor beg of him to interfere. The answer to both your accusation and your prayer shall be — the everlasting silence of eternity. Have the courage to realize that your own soul-value determines your happiness and sorrow, your fortune and calamity in this life. Know the disaster of Europe to be the creation of Europe's *individuals*. "As you sow, you shall reap" is a saying that expresses the law of individual fate. "As you are you shall sow" is the primary truth of individuality. Your soul-value, then, you, your me, the individual, is the creator of your life-conditions. A time of soul-progress shall come when the individual is *conscious* of this fact, and does not create unknowingly.

And how, then, does this European massacre affect our United States? I should remark here that this country is the home of an altogether new race; a race far superior to any other one nestling on this globe. National pride might perhaps invite an admission of this truth. A study of the European nations, however, should give us the full realization of the same. It is perhaps uttering a platitude to state that Americans are broad-minded and universal. But the knowledge that this broad-

mindedness is the natural expression of a universe-conscious soul has the value of a revelation. The average American man is the least absorbed in self of all the individuals on earth. He consequently expresses a less degree of selfishness, tyranny, orthodoxy, and all those qualities that prevent freedom and liberty from reigning supreme. Class-distinction is hardly noticeable in this country. Aristocracy is but a dream of the past. The only acknowledged nobility is the nobility of the soul.

Little do the Americans themselves realize that they represent the highest degree of man-development on earth. The growth of man is in reality the growth of his All-consciousness, an expression of which is the growth of unselfishness. This growth has reached its present climax in the American soul. Spiritually, mentally, and morally, he is master, this much criticised American individual. Who ever knew a man to lead a nation — a man so utterly deaf to his voice of self, a man so intensely aware of a struggling humanity, a man so all-conscious — like Woodrow Wilson? True, there are many such noble beings dispersed among the masses. They often are unnoticed, possibly because their position in life is a humble one. But infinitely more credit deserves he who lives up to his ideals, even when an exalted position might tempt him to save his self by pleasing

others. Carlyle, no doubt, would call that man, Wilson, an ideal king or hero. This man is too great to be appreciated at present, I fear. He is the pioneer of a coming generation. The blows of criticism aimed at him are principally moved by self-interest. It is clear that Wilson does not tolerate graft, greed, and unfairness. It is equally clear that his position of defender of his ideals among self-centered, self-loving members of "Big Business" is an extremely difficult one, demanding the courage and the self-sacrifice of a hero.

A knowledge of the average soul-development of the American man is material enough for the prediction of this nation's future. The law of individual fate is active in America to-day. The American, being what he is, demands a particular fate for his country. This fate is a period of greatness. I may safely predict that this nation shall hold the first position among the nations of the earth ere many years shall have passed. And see how admirably this law of individual fate is performing its irresistible duty! While the old country has invited destruction to purify its retarded soul, this nation receives the opportunity for growth which its law of individual fate demanded. We hear of American merchant marines, of the stars and stripes ruling the waters of the seas! How inexplicably simple, and yet how incom-

prehensibly fitting into all conditions on this globe — this law of individual fate!

This marvelous law does not only guide the nations of the earth; it rules the atom, the flower, the planet, the nebulæ, and also, indeed, the individual. Are you anxious to know your fate? Study your self, its good and bad qualities. Discover the qualities that your being lacks. A blow of cruel "fate" shall undoubtedly invite you to become conscious of that very quality. Be a man! Take both your ups and downs with a smile. Know that you are your own fate. If by chance your fate does not satisfy you, then, I say, change your me, and your fate shall change likewise. Do not burden an unknown god with your many troubles and complaints. Neither accuse him of tormenting you. He should indeed require an army of stenographers to record the complaints and requests of 1500 million people, not to mention the millions that probably inhabit other globes.

VI

THE ORIGIN OF CRIME

This chapter is written in defense of the criminal and the convict. I do not intend to belittle the seriousness of crime; but I am anxious to seek an excuse, if such there is, for the author of crime. If I am successful, I must come to the conclusion that the criminal should be treated like a patient; that he should be attended to by doctors of wisdom, who shall teach him some of the truths of life. As matters stand to-day, a criminal is a despised being, a dangerous animal locked up in an iron cage, with his own miserable soul as his only companion. He is doomed to insanity or soul-starvation. Intellectual and moral development are denied him. Not a word of conversation or kindness remind him of the fact that he is human. Not a single object of glorious universe impresses his soul with the beauty of being. His home is the bare cell; his companion, the grim warden; his soul-food, the rough orders and the attitude of repulsiveness from outsiders.

A prominent preacher in San Francisco not long ago severely criticized a daily paper on account of its anxiety to assist discharged prisoners in obtaining work. The reverend gentleman, no doubt, thought it wicked to give one's sympathy to prisoners. The incident shows what egotistical, narrow-minded ideas even a teacher of the word of God may cherish. I am vaguely reminded of one or two sayings, "Judge not" and "Do unto others" and "Love your brother," and hope that this preacher did not break any of these commandments. For my part, I believe that the man who is thoroughly good, and who knows how to help himself, does not require my sympathy and advice. I prefer to give it to the ignorant individual, the one who brings himself into trouble. And it would seem to me that imprisonment, the loss of liberty and life itself, the bereavement of sunshine and social intercourse, is the worst calamity that can befall a human being. I shudder when I imagine myself behind the iron bars . . .!

In order to find the origin of crime, one should expand his thought-sphere beyond the limits of self-interest and prejudice. The trouble with most students of social problems and life's philosophy is that they are unable to penetrate beyond the boundaries of their immediate surroundings and their impressions. Their viewpoint is limited; their opinions are prejudiced,

and hued with the colors of their personal me. The criminal, as a rule, is being condemned because his actions are repulsive to the me of the one who condemns. Not only the criminal is condemned in such a manner, but even the ordinary human being. When a person acts in a manner of which I do not approve, my natural impulse is to judge and condemn him. I do not always pause and consider the " why " of his actions. My first knowledge is that *I* do not approve of them; I am ready, therefore, to denounce him as a wicked and unprincipled man.

This sort of judgment from a personal viewpoint — a judgment based upon what I am, what I know, and what I am able to grasp — is an infinite source of quarrels and tears. People, as a rule, selfishly cling to their own ideas only, and cannot see " the other fellow's " viewpoint.

In discussing crime, then, I will not judge the criminal from the basis of my own goodness and my own soul-quality. Instead, I will take the position of an impartial observer of the universe, whose eye has been caught by that very astonishing individual, the criminal. What causes crime? Such is the first question I shall ask myself. It is, of course, more satisfactory to reason as follows: " That man's actions are repulsive to me. Lock him up, and be done

with him." But I doubt whether this is the most logical and generous attitude to take in the matter. Nor do I think that such proceedings are liable to do away with crime. We should not kill a patient, but try to conquer his disease.

Looking around in this life of ours, I count nothing but criminals. I do not know of one single exception. The first criminal I discovered was myself. True, there are several degrees of crime. We know, for instance, of intense degrees that endanger public safety. And we lock in a convict-cell those who are thus marked by the creating hand. But there are subtler degrees of crime, which one person is inclined to consider as such, another not. Indeed, many actions and viewpoints are criminal when considered in the light of absolute truth, but perfectly good or harmless in the opinion of the public at large. Whether an action be considered criminal or not, depends largely upon the moral ideal of humanity, upon the degree of soul-development of the human race. As this ideal is becoming more noble and perfect as the years roll by, it is clear that some actions that are considered good or harmless to-day, may be called criminal a century hence.

Man's real being is self-consciousness, which expresses itself in material life through thought

of self in general, and by greed and selfishness in particular cases. We have seen that there are innumerable degrees of self-consciousness among the people of the earth; that a degree of self-consciousness corresponds and harmonizes with a certain degree of ignorance about the laws governing the human being and the outside universe. If we substitute the expression " intense degree of self-consciousness " with " a low stage of development," we come to the conclusion that the man whose being is but little developed is absolutely ignorant of the laws of life, much more so than the average individual. And when I say " ignorant," I mean it in the absolute sense of the word.

Philosophers should become better acquainted with the fact that to Know is to *realize through experience.* I may *believe* anything someone tells me, without *knowing* it to be true. Individual life-experience only, through many a blow and a tear, can make me *realize* a truth. If already realized, my intuition or conscience or moral convictions prevent me from violating that which my being has experienced to be true.

It is, perhaps, not uninteresting to remark that as innumerable people are born with innumerable differences in degree of soul-development, their beings, in some incomprehensible manner, enter life with a certain amount of experience and realization of truth. Whence

that soul-development, experience and realization of truth, you ask? I do not *know*. I shall discuss this matter in my chapter "Conjectures."

There are individuals, then, whose beings are in development far below the average. Their self-consciousness is intense in comparison with that of the average man. Their ignorance of universe and the laws of life is marked. Their knowing does not go beyond that of the demands of their self. They live in total self-absorption, total darkness. Indulging in habits that please their passions, their self, is one of their characteristics. They do not shrink from taking, secretly or by force, the object of their desire. Are they not commanded by that irresistible voice of self that overthunders the voice of danger, and induces them to proceed at any risk? You say that they know better. I claim that they do not *know* better. They know of a law that forbids them to do certain things. They fear this law, and consider it to be the enemy of their self, the bereaver of their freedom. They have been told that it is wicked to lie, to steal, or to murder. They do not *realize* this. If they did realize it, they would not steal or lie. Their voice of self is far stronger than the moral warning uttered by others; far stronger, even, than the fear of a penitentiary. In fact, they cannot help being

criminals, for they cannot help being *what they are.*

This, then, is the main point of my argument: A criminal commits his crimes because his being is what it is; because his me is still in the grasp of intense, almost savage, self-consciousness. This is not the criminal's fault. We should, therefore, condemn all crime, but pity and nurse the criminal. No human being is responsible for what he is, not consciously responsible, at least, when he enters life on his day of birth. Let us remember this undeniable fact! And crime is not so much the manufactured product of the individual as the necessary expression of his being, for the degree of development of which he is not responsible.

Thought of self, the life-expression of self-centeredness, is the sole author of all crime and wickedness. The less self-conscious the individual is, the nobler his actions and ideas are. There are innumerable degrees of self-consciousness, and, consequently, innumerable degrees of crime. Man himself has drawn the line where virtue becomes wickedness. His judgment is based upon the moral ideal of the race; which ideal, in turn, is the expression of the average soul-development of humanity. When a man trespasses beyond the man-made virtue-line, he enters the domain of chastising law.

All other acts, actions, and ideas are not criminal — *in the opinion of the world!*

Maybe there are some highly developed beings who discover sin where the average man does not. Warfare, for instance, is considered by millions of people to be a legitimate undertaking. Some, however, think it damnable and sinful. Many Americans, the representatives of the new race mentioned in my last chapter, vigorously protest against the crime of war. Is it not a crime, after all? It is the expression of thought of self, the worst enemy of humankind at large and the individual in particular. Self-interest (a more moderate term for greed and selfishness) commands armies of soldiers to kill their fellow-travellers through eternity. The man who murders his brother for the sake of self, contracts a life-term in the penitentiary under ordinary circumstances. The law pronounces him a dangerous criminal. But in war . . .! Everything is fair in war, they say — a logic that transcends the limits of my comprehension.

I will say, moreover, that a man like Christ — in my opinion the perfection of man-being, as far as I am able to judge — must have noticed an innumerable variety of sinful qualities in the human being, which qualities were unknown to the average mind of his age,— nay,

even unnoticed by the average mind of to-day! Jesus, however, did not condemn or judge the individual, although he strongly resented the latter's imperfect ideas and deeds, proving to me his deep insight into the marvel of existence. That man, Jesus, must have been a person whose being represented a soul-development which could hardly fit even into our present age. I am not surprized that people called him God, and made such a sorry, fantastic mess of his teachings. They could but repeat his words and parables without realizing their truth. "Seeing they saw not, hearing they heard not, neither did they understand. Therefore spoke he to them in parables."

Jesus' soul-development, I am convinced, was such that intense self-consciousness had been almost entirely replaced by All-consciousness. His being, then, expressed thought for others, thought of the All, instead of thought of self. His life is a marvelous exhibition of unselfishness. We to-day cannot live up to Christ's ideals. Some people realize this so deeply that, in their ignorance, they ridicule his ideas. Others, possessed by a religious fervor, carefully repeat his words and imitate his mode of living, imagining often that they are living the life of a Christ. More than imitation, however, is needed for such an accomplishment. Only

when we ARE something do we LIVE something. No painstaking exercises, no feverish repeating of holy utterances,— nay, not even faithful copying from a great teacher,— can MAKE us a perfect man. But when we ARE perfect in soul, a perfect life and noble actions are the *necessary* expressions of such a soul. The perfecting of man's being should be left to natural individual growth, which is furthered by soul-experience. The mere reading of a good book, the mere copying from a good teacher, do not make me good. All a teacher and a book can possibly accomplish is to clothe *that which I unconsciously realize in my soul in human words and symbols.* In other words, a teacher or a book may give expression to what I am. If a true teaching is beyond my comprehension, it is the word-expression of higher developed beings than I am.

Jesus does not deserve credit for his goodness. To express goodness was a necessity to him. He could not very well help being good; he was not responsible for the perfect quality of his being. Being aware of his great understanding, I expect him to answer all praise and flattery with this question: "Why callest thou me good?" Indeed, what praise do I deserve for my goodness and generosity? Am I responsible for what I am? Most decidedly not!

If I am, I am so unconsciously; and one cannot very well speak of responsibility in that case.

This great human family of ours is a gathering of innumerable beings representing innumerable degrees of soul-development. Each individual realizes, grasps, and perceives to the extent his limit of development allows him to. Beyond that limit he cannot go. Each individual's life is a necessary expression of what he is. Beyond the limits of his being he cannot express himself. When a person's being is not highly developed, his life-expression — his ideas, ideals, ambitions, and actions — appears to be far from perfect in the opinion of one whose being is more advanced. But the latter has no earthly right to condemn the former. The first person's actions are bad in the opinion of the second one. He, the more developed, wiser being, should not act in such a manner; his behaviour would then be sin in the absolute sense of the word; he would then sin against his better understanding; his actions would not be harmonious with the degree of sublimity of his being.

We should, therefore, condemn all wickedness, but refrain from condemning the individual. "Judge not, that ye may not be judged." There might be a better, nobler, wiser man who might judge you, if he so desired. All our

sympathy and nobler feelings should be the criminal's. Verily, he needs them. He is a born invalid, expressing his crippled being in a most pitiful manner, suffering heavily for expressing himself in such an imperfect way. If his wickedness is such that it imperils public safety, we cannot do better than be his guardian. Not a frowning, rough, cruel, contempt-expressing guardian, however! One cannot cure a patient by loathing him. The criminal is just as much in need of life, sunshine, and impression as any other human being is. We certainly do not wish to kill that little spark of soul in the criminal altogether, do we? No; our generous Christian endeavour is to make it burst into a bright flame.

VII

VISIBLE EXPRESSION OF THE INVISIBLE

I shall now discuss a subject well known to my intelligent readers, the truth of which, however, has not struck him as being beyond the ordinary. I am referring to the subject of expression.

Everything in this world is the expression of something invisible. When, for instance, I see a man, I do not see the real man; I merely see the visible expression of his invisible, fundamental being. This statement is so logical, so well known, that we need not exhaust our supply of arguments in order to prove it. The question that interests us most is: How can we read the invisible, fundamental being from its visible or sensible expression? It is difficult to answer this question with a rule or a law. I cannot make the matter clearer than by stating that the physical man is the exact expression of his personality or soul. As an illustration, I may refer to a defective lamp that radiates imperfect light, and a good lamp giving better light.

Man is too much inclined to know a combination of form, color, and substance to be the real thing. A study of his self may easily convince him that his idea is an erroneous one. This marvelous body-machinery of mine is, after all, but the servant of my real me. I command it to move; it obeys. It would even appear that certain parts of the body have been given self-government in order to reduce the rush at headquarters.

Did you ever pay much attention to a statement made by an expert on criminology: "He is the type of a criminal"? Is the physical man the criminal, or is that bodily appearance merely the visible expression of the little-developed being?

Did you ever study the features, the appearance, of a great man? No doubt you have. Our novels and magazines teem with descriptions of great and noble men, of heroes and martyrs. We read of firm features, strong chins, noble brows, belonging to the strong and noble soul; of well-shaped hands and soulful eyes belonging to the artist; of knitting eyebrows, lips pressed tightly together in determination, and the somber looks of a man with a selfish will. And our heroine, whose soul as a rule is spotless, is pictured as the visible manifestation of beauty itself.

It is, indeed, a peculiar law that gives par-

ticular features to a particular being. I never saw a noble brow that did not hide a noble soul; nor clearly cut, prominent features that did not reveal strong qualities of the individual; nor thick lips, little mouse-ears, and half-closed, restless eyes that did not speak of selfishness and cunning. And even a man's way of eating, sleeping, walking, dressing — nay, a man's way of doing *anything* — betrays the nature and the quality of his real being. Man's physical appearance is an open book; rather deceptive, often, to a beginner, but nevertheless a faithful positive copy of an inner negative. A crowded restaurant to me is a big human library. The contents of the various volumes are hidden, but the quality of the covers is in perfect harmony with the quality of the texts. The greedy, selfish man cannot eat without annoying his neighbor with his slobbish mouth-music. The vain woman (a faithful expression of selfishness and, in last analysis, intense self-consciousness) employs the most dignified grimaces and movements of her arms and hands to finish her meal. The dreamer throws salt into his coffee, and is totally oblivious to his surroundings. The travelling salesman in particular and the little idealistic person in general, make themselves heard all over the place. Full of interest is this world! It never threatens me with the dread of society — *ennui.*

So innumerable are the visible expressions of invisible being that a good-sized volume might easily be written on the subject. The point I wish to emphasize, however, is that man's appearance is the exact expression of his being. I am tempted to make a more daring statement, and say that the personality, in some incomprehensible manner, has shaped a body for itself, the quality of which is in harmony with its own; that the me of man, moreover, absolutely controls its own appearance, whether man is conscious of this fact or not. I am inclined to believe this, because I have noticed that highly sensitive people reflect their soul-disturbance in their bodily appearance. They are generally sick. Doctors prescribe diets, pills, and poison, without being able to cure them. The trouble, however, is not rooted in the physical organs or the body. The latter are misbehaving because headquarters refuse to behave. A soul-tonic in such cases is needed, not a pill or a dose of poison.

And where, may I ask, is that impression, sorrow, rooted? In man's being, no doubt. And see how faithfully this impression of sorrow is expressed by the physical appearance! The body stoops; the face is marked with lines; bodily health, as a rule, declines. Happiness likewise expresses itself in the most visible manner in the body of man. The best tonic for

a sick person is contentment or, perhaps, a hearty laugh.

I have known a remarkable case of an individual who in a short time entirely changed his personality. He suddenly woke from an indifferent attitude towards existence to a vivid interest in its laws. Within a year he developed great gifts and noble qualities. The change in his physical appearance, as a result of the change in his personality, was astonishing. He had grown several inches; his walk had become more erect; his features had grown more prominent.

I stated that man's personality, be it consciously or unconsciously, controls the body. This means infinitely more than we may think at first consideration. We must remember that the body is made up of innumerable molecules and atoms; that each particle is life, or, I should say, is controlled by an individual me. We have seen that everything in universe is in reality nothing but a degree of self-consciousness; that an intense degree of self-consciousness expresses intense limitation, and is overruled by a less degree. The animal, for instance, is master over the plant; the human being rules over animal and plant both; the highly developed man over his less developed brother. And it would appear that man's being in the course of evolution attracts beings of lower

development, shapes them into the visible expression of his self, and absolutely controls them as their lord and master.

Everything, no matter how low in development, fits in an incomprehensible manner into the existence of higher developed beings. Gases, minerals, animals, and plants are necessary to man's life. Gases, minerals, and plants are the necessary slaves of the animal. Gases and minerals are the necessary victims of the plant. This universe is a huge slave-market, where greater development controls and utilizes a lesser development. The king of slaveholders in man, who, being the least self-conscious of all beings, is master over them all. I am not ashamed to admit that I lack the power of expression needed to picture the immensity and intricacy of life's machinery.

Man's physical appearance is not the only expression of what he is. His ideals, customs, religions, ambitions, laws, products of art and inventions, all hint at his real being. The religion of the Jews, as expressed in the Old Testament, clearly shows what undeveloped beings those inhabitants of the "Holy Land" must have been. Their religion was but an expression of their soul-development. It strongly savors of greed, selfishness, and barbarism. Their god existed within the limits of their comprehension, their sense of generosity, beauty,

and justice. This omnipotent being was susceptible to flattery, easily bribed, and prejudiced beyond comprehension. He was the feared but intimate friend of the Jews, and the destructive foe of their enemies. He assisted them in the most barbaric manner in destroying the foe of Israel. Woman nor babe was spared by him. Murder, adultery, and deceitful tricks were employed by this all-powerful being to revenge himself upon the enemy of his "chosen people." Of course, I do not believe a word of all the terrible things the "inspired" barbarians wrote about this god. I am happily confident in my opinion that he never existed. This, however, is the interesing fact I learn from the Old Testament's accounts, that the god-idea is the exact expression of the individual's development. As I am, thus is my god. A savage has a cruder conception of the power or powers that rule universe than a civilized man has. The individual who is little acquainted with the laws governing existence, generally knows of two gods,— the god of goodness, which he names God, and the god of wickedness, which he names the Devil. And the more developed the individual is, the more truthful is his conception of the ruling power of immensity.

Needless to say that art and literature are the expressions of man's real being. A painter

visibly expresses his ideal on canvas. In his painting you behold *him* to the utmost limits of his soul-quality. A close observer may discover from that orderly arranged heap of shade and color the good and bad qualities, the ideas and ideals, of its creator. Also from Chopin's beautifully sad waltzes, nocturnes and ballads may we learn a great deal about the composer's nature.

Is there, indeed, anything touching our ordinary daily lives that does not reveal something of the nature of man? I may mention clothes, for example. The gaudiness, the neatness, the refined and subtle arrangement of clothes, speak volumes indeed. Vivid colors,— as red, for instance,— are generally worn by the individual whose chief ambition is the satisfying of self. I do not mean to imply that a person necessarily has such a nature when he wears red. But when his being *is* little developed, he expresses this fact in one way by displaying a liking for vivid colors. I am reminded of the interesting fact that nature adorns itself in bright colors. When I say "nature," I refer to those beings that are less developed and more intensely in the grip of self-consciousness than man is. Red is one of the predominant colors in nature. Buds and twigs are generally red first, then change their hue into brown and green. Many birds attract

members of the opposite sex with their gaudy plumage. A specie of monkeys have a bright red spot on a certain part of their body, and turn this vividly hued spot towards the female in order to attract her. Other animals, again, attract the opposite sex by emitting a natural odor, which method is faithfully copied by woman in an artificial manner. The very sensual woman generally carries with her the overwhelming odor of an abundance of manufactured perfume. Everything, I say, even unto the most trivial action and fact, is an expression of man's inner being, and indicative of his soul-development.

Here in America, where a new and more advanced race is being born, we notice expressions of man's being which are totally unknown in other countries. Our attention is first of all drawn to the physical appearance of the American man. From the melting-pot of different nationalities and their various types of physical expression is emerging an altogether new physical man. His like is not to be found across the Atlantic. I am of opinion that this new man is good to behold. Rather tall in stature, with frank, penetrating eyes, strong features — well-developed jawbones, chin, and Roman nose,— he suggests to me the qualities of strength, perseverance, and nobility. His features do not suggest brutal, but moral,

strength. Such being is able to face the entire world and a dainty sweetheart both, in an irreproachable manner.

There is a great deal of noble sentiment in this strong American man, greater, indeed, than he is willing to admit. This sentiment is expressed in his finely shaped nostrils, in his eyes and eyebrows; also, very truly, in his artistic creations — his songs, for example. (I do not class ragtime music among "artistic creations.") Our brothers across the water generally believe that Americans do not have a taste for music and beauty. They are gravely mistaken. Where classical music, for instance, is the property of a few genii and the educated classes of Europe, it is public property in America. It has struck me that patrons of ordinary, everyday-life cafeterias and twenty-cent-shows apparently demand, and certainly receive, music which in Europe is enjoyed by so-called privileged classes. In Europe one seeks in vain for an ordinary lunch-place where meals are served with musical renderings from Thais, Schubert, Brahms, Dvorak,— music which can only be appreciated by the soul that harbors beauty as one of its qualities.

In a foregoing chapter I remarked that the American's ideas and ideals are the expressions of his being; that these ideas and ideals are the most advanced of the age for the reason

that they are the expressions of an advanced being. In connection with this subject I will point to America's skyscrapers. These towering giants are steel-and-stone-expressions of American mentality and universality. They roughly express the greatness of their creator's being. They are the American soul solidified,— a soul that is to a great extent All-conscious, inclined to soar the depths of the heavens in search of knowledge regarding the laws of existence. An America with two- or three-story buildings only is unthinkable. Man's being expresses itself visibly in such a manner that the expression becomes a manifestation belonging exclusively to its particular degree of development.

But enough about expression of man-being. One might devote an entire volume to this particular subject. Its existence may be discovered and studied by the analytical mind. We cannot make the same statement about the expression of the lower developed beings that share our earthly home. In fact, man has ever been loath to recognize the principles that govern his being in that of the animal or plant. He has ever considered himself to be existing in absolute separation from the rest of universe. Man, universe, and God — such has ever been his division of the All. I am inclined to blame his intense self-consciousness for his mistake.

My knowledge and observation-power would inform me of the fact that there exists ONE universe, in which man figures as its most noble and most developed member. All members are governed by identical laws, which operate differently, however, and in harmony with the degree of development of the being acted upon. And even as man's physical appearance is an expression of his real being, thus, I am convinced, are the flower, the animal, nay, even the grain of sand, visible expressions of being. And the expression corresponds with a certain degree of development.

Nature is a huge stepladder, divided into four (or perhaps more) minor ladders joined together. The reprensentative of the lowest ladder expresses itself through apparent lifelessness; of the second, through life confined to one spot; of the third, through life expressing greater freedom of movement and an absorbing struggle for existence; of the fourth, through a still greater freedom,— a refined, almost artful, struggle for existence, and a distinctly smaller degree of self-centeredness.

Universe, as we see it, is not the real universe. It is the reflected expression of an invisible world of various degrees of self-consciousness. Did you ever drink the beauty of a full-blown rose, standing mute and fragrant in the cool, silver moonlight? You were con-

scious of something more than its lovely-shaped petals and its soft odor. There was a something speaking through and behind that rose-form,— something undefinable. . . . This same undefinable something is softly penetrating through the dim objects of a twilight-scene. The tall trees, appearing like giant sentinels standing immovable in the glimmer of a dark blue-yellow background, are the materialized reflection-dreams of something else.

The most sublime expression I know is that of love between man and woman,— so sublime, indeed, that I will endeavour to show that this inspiration of all life is something more than the vapor of sentimentality and imagination.

To love is to BE the one you love. The lover should only then cry out from the depths of his heart when he has at least reached the degree of soul-beauty of his beloved one. Then only does he KNOW her, for her being is then contained in his; she is he, and he is she: they are one.

Even as a man must be beauty himself in order to be able to perceive and know the infinite beauty of universe — thus must the lover's being contain the qualities of his beloved's soul so that he may KNOW and be his beloved. And when he knows her because he is she, he loves

her. Such love, which is the ideal love, is as rare as the lily in the desert.

When the beloved is not near, the lover misses her as he would miss his self when lost in an empty wilderness. Their souls have mingled; they have become one. And as all the universe is the visible expression of invisible soul, as invisible grief and joy are visibly painted on the countenance, thus is the unseen mingling of two souls expressed by a kiss, by enfolding arms, and by intermingling bodies. Those who are one in soul express this unity in every respect. But those who desire the physical embrace only, sin in the face of almighty truth.

Loving his beloved, her being is a part of that of her lover. Therefore, no wall of distant respect and admiration separates him from her. He delights in knowing her to be his playmate for life. Is he not she? Is not the happiness of two lovers caused by a perfect companionship similar to that of two children? Many an unhappily wedded man expressed more admiration and respect than love for his life-companion,— cool, awe-inspiring respect and admiration,— because he did not know her; because he was not she, and therefore could not love her.

Love is confident. When a man loves, he knows it. Neither fear nor possibilities can shake the inward knowledge of his love. To-

day? He loves her. To-morrow? He will love her. When a doubt creeps in his heart, suggesting that he may not love her to-morrow, he does not really love her to-day.

The perfect love is highly sensitive. Because the lover *is* his beloved, each feeling of affection she withholds from him is a wound in his soul. The perfect lover is sad at heart when his beloved bestows her affections upon another man, for he loses a part of his own being whenever she gives her soul, partly or wholly, to his rival.

Love is also generous and unselfish. Whatever the intensity of pain in the wounded soul, it can be borne and even cherished by the perfect lover. Real love does not demand, does not claim. It gives. And giving, it allows the beloved one a boundless freedom in choosing her own happiness. Marriage is happiness, and blended souls are most content, when the lovers are unselfish and give freedom one to the other.

Love is inspiration. The loving soul is being endowed with the qualities of beauty, generosity, tenderness, and mercy. And as universe is ugly when perceived by an ugly soul, and beautiful when a beautiful soul is conscious of it, thus is all the world a veritable paradise to him who is a true lover. All great, creating souls received their inspiration from

the woman they adored, even when an unanswered love stirred the beauteous depths of a slumbering being.

The noble, unselfish soul is not defeated by an unanswered love. The man does not ask; his love merely asks for a soul to worship, even as a flower, by its very nature, asks for the vitalizing sun-glow. The real lover gives, and that which he gives is love. Moreover, he is a man, and sufficiently unselfish to be able to bear sorrow and disappointment. An unanswered love shall ever be a divine test of a soul's unselfishness.

This, then, is love — the expression of two blending souls.

VIII

WHAT IS TRUTH?

It is true that the appletree blossoms in Spring. It is true that the average temperature of the temperate zones is higher than that of the Arctic regions. It is true that two volumes of hydrogen and one volume of oxygen, under certain conditions, form water. How do we know these facts to be true? Did we ever hear anyone contradict these statements? No one ever did. For the truth of these statements can be verified, directly or indirectly, by observation. This truth relates to the physical world, the appearance of universe. Our five senses are the observing powers that report their experiences to their master, the brain, which is the seat of man's intellect.

I will name this truth that can be known, directly or indirectly, by observation, physical truth. And I will name the amount of physical truth known by an individual, his physical or intellectual knowledge.

Each of us has intellectual knowledge. A person may use his powers of observation to the utmost capacity. His intellectual knowl-

edge may be vast. We call him learned, and offer him the position of professor at our university. But a person with a great intellectual knowledge does no more than analyze the appearance of universe. Even when he knows all there is to be known about the physical world, he may yet be totally ignorant about the foundation of the appearance. Existence may yet be an absolute mystery to him.

There exists another truth, dealing not with the physical appearance of universe, but with universe itself. I often wish that every one could agree about this truth. There would then be less creeds, dogmas, and philosophies. Bitter arguments and creed-hatred would be superfluous. Mental tyranny and arrogance would find no place in this life. Alas! it is impossible that all people agree upon the subject, existence in its reality. For where physical truth may be tangibly verified to the extent of our physical observation-power, the truth about the real universe is primarily realized in our being, our consciousness, our personality. And as there exist innumerable degrees of being, there should be found innumerable degrees of this existence-knowledge.

To give an instance of the possibility of disagreement about this truth: How can you convince me that you speak the truth when you say that I am a perfect image of God? I

cannot verify your statement by observation. I never saw God. I never observed God by means of any of my physical senses. I refuse to believe, unless my belief takes the form of a logical conclusion. The result will be that you call me a heretic, an atheist, or a devil, and that I accuse you of being illogical and superstitious.

I will name this truth that deals with existence in its reality, spiritual truth. And I will name the amount of spiritual truth realized by an individual, his soul-knowledge or wisdom. We should, furthermore, when referring to intellectual knowledge, speak of knowing; when referring to wisdom, of realizing. For one may know something intellectually without fully realizing it spiritually. A person may acquaint me with a spiritual truth which appears logical and reasonable to my intellect. My failure to apply or live up to this truth in my daily life should prove, however, that I do not realize this truth. The criminal, for example, knows that it is wrong to steal, but he does not realize it.

Man has been too anxious to know his brain or his intellect to be the "real thing." The intellect is but a servant of man's being or consciousness. It is, moreover, an acquisition. Man-evolution gradually demanded an intellect that would assimilate and analyze physical im-

pressions. There are, however, numerous impressions that do not reach the brain through the various channels of sense. They reach the consciousness directly, without the individual being aware of them. Only when these impressions are transferred to the intellect, and there analyzed, do we become aware of having had an impression. The little-developed beings of universe receive their impressions in the above described direct manner. They possess no intellect to analyze their impressions. They are not aware of being conscious.

That there exists a close relationship and a separation both, between intellect and consciousness is proven by several interesting facts. I may, for instance, analyze visible universe intellectually. Meditating upon its magnitude and its complicated life-machinery, I shall gradually impress my consciousness. My being becomes aglow with the sense of beauty. I feel inspired and strong. These same sensations may be obtained directly, without an intermediate intellectual analysis. I need but look at the world, and shall obtain the same results. The beauty of a piece of music need not be analyzed intellectually; it may be felt. The soul-beauty of your beloved one is not always analyzed intellectually; as a rule it is felt. And the impression universe leaves upon your being need not be caused by intellectual

analysis; it can be felt directly, even when our intellect is totally inactive.

We may, on the other hand, analyze these direct impressions intellectually. This is, very often, a hopeless task. Our intellect is but a coarse reproduction of our consciousness. It is unable to register in thought and idea the subtler impressions of our being.

Impression, then, may have travelled along two different roads: Objects, senses, intellect, and consciousness; or object, consciousness, intellect.

I never saw a man whose being was highly developed who did not also have a highly developed intellect. The highly developed man is comparatively little self-conscious, and expresses his being through generosity, broad-mindedness, high morals and principles. You shall invariably find such a man to be the owner of an uncommon intellect. Neither did I ever meet a little developed being with a great intellect. There exists a relationship between intellect and consciousness, although they function differently. Intellect corresponds chiefly with the visible appearance of universe, consciousness with the invisible, real universe. There does not, however, exist a distinct separation between the two. The one gradually flows into the other.

I shall now proceed to discuss spiritual

truth, for the reason that it is the cause of much bitterness, arguing and hatred. It is, moreover, the fundamental truth of universe. Physical truth is but a coarse expression of spiritual truth, to which I shall from now on simply refer as "truth."

Truth is but partly known to man. If he knew it in its entirety, he would know absolute truth, which is the only truth that permeates universe from world-center to world-center. Man knows but a part of the absolute truth. The truth he knows and utters is relative truth. Absolute truth is universe itself. It is existence in the absolute sense. It is to BE in the absolute sense. Absolute truth is perfection, which cannot be questioned. If man knew the absolute truth, he would not be tempted to ask questions. All there is to be known would be known by him. Nothing would puzzle him.

Viewed from a relative standpoint, absolute truth is no truth, for the reason that it is infinite. If man ever masters absolute truth, he shall never know about it. To know is to be partly ignorant about the whole truth. All measurable knowledge is proof of ignorance and imperfection. If man knew the whole truth, he would not be able to say: "So much I know, and so much I do not know." To measure his knowledge should be an impossibility. There would be no ignorance to measure it by.

It has, perhaps, become clear that we cannot, in our present imperfection at least, conceive of absolute truth and absolute knowing. When absolute knowing has become a fact, relative knowing ceases.

Man's knowledge is relative. To know is TO BE. When making this statement, I do not refer to intellectual knowledge, which is but an outgrowth of spiritual knowledge; I refer to that knowledge which amounts to soul-realization. The man who is inwardly convinced that he should be generous, broad-minded, and high-principled, knows and realizes something because he IS that something. A degree of existence-knowledge is the life-expression of a degree of BEING. The most intense self-consciousness is the opposite pole of to be in the absolute sense or absolute All-consciousness. There exist billions of intermediate stages between these two extremes. If we suppose the hypothetical ether to be the most intensely self-conscious something in the universe, we know of the following higher stages of being: electron, atom, plant, animal, man. Each of these beings IS, and the is-ness of each of them is nothing but a knowing or realization.

How can I possibly love my neighbor unless I realize in my soul that to do so is to be truth itself? How can I live the truth unless I AM that truth? You cannot compel me to love

my neighbor. All your sermons are of no avail. When I force myself to live up to your moral teachings, I am merely unnatural. Nay, I must BE truth in order to live it. My being must be a certain degree of sublimity; then only do I live and know that degree of sublimity.

The different degrees of human knowledge are explained by the different degrees of self-consciousness of the human beings. I do not claim to know absolute truth. If I did, I should not be here, wondering about existence. But I do maintain that self-consciousness, with its various degrees, is the key to the situation of changeable universe. There are no words available to express this strange something, self-consciousness. I can but say that it is self-centeredness, an awareness of self, a center of relative being in a world of all-being or not-relative-being. A self-conscious being is chiefly aware of self. Its self is a universe. The more intense its awareness of self is, the less it can know about the whole universe or the whole truth. We shall see, then, that the greatly self-centered being is ignorant. The life-expressions of the degrees of his development are selfishness and ignorance. This ignorance is both spiritual and intellectual. His intellectual ignorance is but a secondary ignorance. The primary ignorance is rooted in his being, nay, it *is* his being.

We shall see that the least self-centered being is the wisest, and, often, the most learned. His awareness of self not being so intense, he is receptive to impression and knowledge. His knowledge is both spiritual and intellectual. His intellectual knowledge, again, is but secondary. The primary knowledge is rooted in his being; it is his being. He is, in being, a certain degree of truth. The life-expressions of his being are generosity, wisdom, knowledge, and high morals and principles.

Had I but words at my disposal to express my meaning! Our only salvation is to know the truth by being the truth. To know truth is often all we can do. To express our soul-knowledge is often an impossibility.

In connection with the above statements, I shall now make a plea for freedom of thought. Only ignorance can be the cause of mental tyranny. To command a person to believe along certain lines is to violate the truth. That many men to-day are not sufficiently wise to realize this is pitiable.

The degree of self-consciousness of the individual determines his degree of knowledge. Each individual's knowledge reaches a certain limit. Beyond this limit he cannot know. As his intellect, furthermore, corresponds with his being or consciousness, it is limited to a similar degree. It is for this reason that a person's

knowledge is knowledge existing to himself only. Supposing his being and his intellect to be extremely limited, one cannot possibly explain facts to him that lie beyond the limit of his knowing-power. If he has great faith in his teacher, he may believe him. He cannot know and realize the uttered truths. When he clings to his individual knowledge and refuses to accept anything he does not know, we call him a skeptic. When he readily digests the theories and dogmas of others without knowing them to be true, we say that he is a believer.

Each individual is truth himself. Each individual may say: "I am the truth." There exists for him no other truth than his own. What should he do with truth that cannot be known and realized by him? It is foreign to him. He claims that it is not truth. He laughs at you, and wonders whether you are insane or not.

To teach truth is, strictly speaking, impossible. Even if my reader should agree with everything I have written in this book, I shall have taught him nothing. I shall have clothed his own soul-knowledge in a garb of words and symbols. I shall have given expression to that which he knew already. We often notice people who are guided by lofty ideals and noble principles, and who are unable to explain their view-point of life intellectually. Their knowl-

edge is primarily rooted in their being, and is but partly transferred to their intellect. Such people merely know that they should live their noble lives. They cannot discover a "why" for their noble actions and viewpoints. They may read a book that will appeal to them. It teaches them a great deal, apparently. In reality it is but expressing their own knowledge of which they were not aware.

To my reader, then, I say: Take not my word for granted. If my thoughts appeal to you, I shall know that they express your own knowledge. I do not proclaim their truth to the world. They are true to me. You may condemn my thoughts if you wish, but you should not condemn me; for my thoughts are the expression of my being, of the amount of truth I represent. Even if this amount of truth be little, your wisdom shall forbid you to condemn me, the individual. I am not knowingly responsible for the degree of my soul-development.

No individual should be condemned for his thoughts and ideas. The latter are the faithful expressions of the quality of his being. From them one may discover the amount of truth that the individual represents. We may condemn his thoughts for not being in harmony with the quality of our own being. We may endeavor to convince others that his viewpoints

are false. But we must refrain from hating the thinker of such thoughts. Such attitude is unwise, and a slap in the face of almighty truth.

Authority in connection with the truth of existence does not exist unless the individual willingly accepts it. Even Christ was no authority. Each individual is his own authority. Jesus of Nazareth fully realized this fact. He understood that his knowledge reached far beyond the knowing-limits of his audience. To the people "he spoke in parables, for they did not understand." It would appear, however, that he met a few more developed beings "to whom he revealed all things." These few men, the apostles, continued to teach Christ's philosophy of existence. That the human soul was and is not ripe for this philosophy has been clearly proven by more than one miserable fact. Not being able to grasp the essence of Christ's teachings, his followers very soon turned them into a sorrowful mess of fanaticism, childish worship and church-tyranny.

I do not know whether Jesus actually existed. I have my doubts about the matter. This much is certain, that a great man with a great knowledge did exist. If this man was not Jesus, he must necessarily have been the author of the New Testament or the teacher of the authors.

The man Jesus, as pictured in the four Gos-

pels, represented an as yet unknown degree of truth. His knowledge of existence is, to me, more than surprising. His very life is one of the hints needed to solve the great problem of universe. His self-consciousness was the least intense of which I ever knew, heard, or read. Thought of self was practically unknown to him. Only once or twice in his entire life do we notice an awareness of self. In the Garden of Gethsemane he asked three of his disciples to watch with him, as " his soul was exceeding sorrowful." The disciples fell asleep, and Christ reproached them as follows: " What, could ye not watch with me for one hour? " His pitiful utterance on the cross: " Lord, my Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me? " is another rare instance of his awareness of self. But his deeds and actions prove that he was practically All-conscious instead of self-conscious. Yes, he was the truth, more so than any other individual known to humanity. To love your neighbor, to do good unto others, to help your helpless fellow-man, this was the essence of his philosophy. His philosophy was the necessary expression of his being, which had reached an unheard-of degree of development. It was not a manufactured heap of morals and pious utterings. Nay, to Jesus it was a necessity to do good and to love his neighbor.

Behind his philosophy stands a formidable

answer to that impertinent little question: "Why?" To love your neighbor is not an act of sentimentality, piety, or fear of a frowning ruler. To love your neighbor is to be highly philosophical, to be true to a sublime degree. You cannot help being this; you simply express what you are. Many people attach to "love" a sugar-sweet, piety-enveloped meaning. They are mistaken. Universal love dwells in the soul of him who KNOWS. When you realize the equality of soul, you love your neighbor. When you realize that man is not knowingly responsible for his low or high soul-development, you condemn his actions, but forgive him, the individual. You love him. And your love is nothing but understanding, knowledge, *truth!*

When you are not wrapped up in your self, you are absorbed in the All. Your interest is centered in humanity, in the flowers, in the stars, in anything but your self. You are receptive to impression and knowledge. You are broad-minded and generous, forgiving and merciful. You not only love your fellow-man, you also love universe in its entirety. You are a universal soul. You are preparing yourself to become a god.

I repeat that Christ's teachings are embodied in a philosophy of the highest order. If you wish to call them religion, I shall claim that there is no higher religion than true philoso-

phy. Science is the conqueror of truth. Philosophy is the conqueror of truth. The truth of existence can only be expressed by science and philosophy. God himself is plain, simple truth.

To the degree the individual is truth, to such degree is he God. How shall I ever know God unless I be God myself? How can I know beauty unless I be beauty myself? How can I know truth if I am not truth myself? "I and the Father are one," said Christ.

Look around in this life of ours! "Christ" and "love" are words uttered in thousands of pulpits. Bibles are sold by the millions. What good have the pulpits and the Bibles wrought? What is the reason that millions of hard workers unite to oppose their brother-oppressors? Why should graft, greed, and injustice exist? What is the cause of the great European calamity? Whence party-hatred and creed-hatred? What have you accomplished during the last twenty centuries, Christian Church?

There is but one answer to the above questions; one answer, only. I wish to print it in big, black letters. If I could print a devil behind each character, I would do so. This is the answer: IGNORANCE. The church should teach truth, not vagaries and superstition. Preachers should become broad-minded. The limiting qualities of creed and dogma prevent

them from ever knowing anything. I belong to no philosophical society. I belong to no church. You cannot possibly class me among schools of philosophy. My desire to know the truth is unlimited. I will listen patiently to any religion or philosophy. I refuse to be limited by "fundamental principles" and "doctrines." I refuse to be a liar. Let me know the truth as I know it. Allow me to penetrate beyond man-made boundaries. To the truth of existence I am wedded, not to religions and philosophies! I am my own authority, my own critic, my own creed, my own truth! So is everyone.

Man's being has developed during the last twenty centuries. The church has not, or perhaps very little. The consequence is that the church is compelled to attract people by giving musical programs, by advertising on billboards, by proclaiming "go-to-church" days. Let the church be courageous and honest! Let the church change its policy! Let the church raise the level of its teachings to that of the average soul-development of humanity! Their buildings would be crowded. There are thousands of people hungry for knowledge and truth. Let there be one church wherein the truth of existence is taught!

To him who teaches principles, dogmas, and religion in general against his better under-

standing, I utter a friendly but solemn warning. The only black sin, the only hideous crime, in this existence is to belie that which you know. A man who does not live up to the limit of his knowledge by wilfully acting against his better understanding, contracts an enormous debt. Teach the greatest nonsense you wish, but be sincere about it! Express that which you are in a natural, truthful manner. If our natural sinning demands a penalty, what about the man who sins against his better understanding?

IX

DEFENDING THE DEVIL

From the foregoing, my readers may conclude that in my opinion neither good nor bad exists. We should either call everything good, or we should call everything bad. Bad and good are but relative qualities. These qualities do not really permeate universe; they are the creations of man. The degree of badness or goodness of something is determined by the individual's opinion. Many conditions do not harmonize with the quality of my being; I shall call them bad. But these very same conditions may be good for another man.

Badness and goodness, then, exist to the individual. He is the sole judge of the degree of badness or goodness of a thing. His opinion, however, is one of the many expressions of his soul-quality. There are innumerable degrees of being, and consequently a great number of different opinions. One person may call a thing bad; another may be able to discover a few good qualities that belong to it. Which of the two judges is right? They are both

right. Each of them is right when he judges from his own basis of personality. His opinion has a foundation — which is his being.

Nobody has the right and the power to prevent a person from condemning anything he wishes to condemn. Interference is positively useless. One sees the world through the colored glasses of the personality. To change this color immediately is practically impossible. This change should be effected through individual experience, and the patience and the perseverance of outsiders. Violence, bitterness, and hatred are ineffective, and merely prove the ignorance of man. To condemn the individual is, as I have pointed out elsewhere, a violation of the truth of existence.

The differences in degree of soul-development are not so wide but that thousands of men can agree upon the goodness or the badness of a thing. We shall find groups, nay masses, of men holding the same opinions. These opinions are the expressions of the average soul-development of humanity. The highest developed beings are the pioneers of unborn generations. Their opinions seem incomprehensible, and are sometimes condemned. A century often elapses before the average being agrees with their uttered thoughts.

Seen from an impersonal viewpoint, there exists neither good nor bad. We may call every-

thing good, we may call everything bad. We cannot, however, call this universe good and bad both. Less bad is more good; less good is more bad. One cannot draw a line of distinction between good and bad. They are mere qualities given by the individual to existing things.

The truth is that nothing is — except existence. There is no reason why we should call existence either good or bad. It is: this is all we can say about it. When we realize that every thing and every happening is a necessary, indispensable part of existence, we cannot be tempted to call anything either good or bad. But when we consider the usefulness, the purpose, and the aim of existing things and happenings in relation to ultimate existence, we can but speak of one thing: goodness.

It is rather difficult to realize the goodness in everything that is. Our judgment is primarily based on self-interest. We generally decide that a thing is good or bad for *us*. Our self-interest makes us narrowminded. We are unable to understand that something may seem bad and useless to thousands of people, while it yet has a good purpose in the great scheme of existence. If we could view the world from an absolutely impersonal standpoint, we should discover that everything is good.

There is a good in everything that we name bad. There is a good in anything that is.

Nothing is wasted, nothing is useless. If something has no aim and no purpose, it should not exist. The dirt in the street and the star in the sky, the grief in your heart and the smile on your lips, the errors and the good deeds of man — each of these things is needed; each of these things has been given a task to accomplish. Without one of these things, universe would crumble to fragments, for together they make existence.

Contrast is powerful and universal. It is a mighty weapon of expression. It is invariably found in existing things. The contrast between light and dark in a painting makes it impressive. A piece of music that introduces a soft, tender strain in the beginning and bursts out in mighty chords in the middle, to resume its tenderness in the end, fills the soul with inspiration. Give me the night and the day, that I may appreciate both! Let me know the tear, that I may enjoy my happiness! Woman, give me your wildest emotion and your calmest love, that I may adore you!

Who ever knew of a mountain without a valley nestling at its foot? Could the snow-brilliant light of the summit exist without the darkness of the canyon? Could man exist without woman, or woman without man? Light and dark are but shades of one existence. Good and bad are but degrees of one good. Man and

woman are but expression of one sublimity. Two is an unknown number in universe. The arithmetic of existence is: one and one make one.

And I claim that God and the Devil are one. That which we name "of the devil" is as good as God is. Our ignorance forbids us to see. Our self-interest has blindfolded us. Together they make the incomprehensible Infinite.

I claim that man and woman together make one. The man is no more than the woman, the woman no more than the man. The one gives and receives, the other receives and gives. Together they make the incomprehensible Infinite.

I claim that darkness and light are one. The darkness makes light, and light makes the darkness. Together they make the incomprehensible Infinite.

And sadness and joy are in reality one. When the tear is unknown, the smile is but fiction. The one does not exist without the other. Together they make the incomprehensible Infinite.

The God of good and the Devil of wickedness work in perfect harmony. The rise of nations and the fall of empires, the destruction and birth of sun-worlds, the devastating floods and the periods of peace, are the works of God and the Devil, who in reality are one. The Devil destroys the old and the retarded, and God builds the new and the better. God and the

Devil are one, the truth of everlasting existence.

Bad is but a hidden good. Loss is but an unknown gain. Destruction is an unseen birth. Universe in its reality is neither good nor bad. It IS; it just *is* — to-day, to-morrow, forever. It was yesterday, and ever before yesterday. Its ROBE is changeable. Its robe is good and bad in the opinion of man. When a tip of its garment is worn out, calamity destroys it. But a new and better patch is stitched on by progress; perhaps not here, but in an undreamed-of corner of universe. Universe is balanced. There is no loss; there is no gain. All loss is gain, all gain is loss. Existence is forever one, never more, never less.

I call a deed good when the quality of my being is in harmony with the quality of the deed. I call a thing bad when its quality does not harmonize with the quality of my being. I condemn certain deeds and thoughts and ideas with all the power of my soul. I condemn them for being unfit for *my* being. They may be necessary to my brother, and therefore good for him. I do not condemn *him* for thinking his thoughts and committing his deeds. Each thought has its purpose in the scheme of life. Each action has its function in the scheme of existence.

That which we name "of the Devil" is the only power that moves progress. Thank God!

I am a sinner. My sins and my imperfect qualities guarantee me progress of soul. The biggest mistake of my life is the most powerful hint at improvement.

My sins and mistakes are numbered. They lie within the realm of my being. Beyond my degree of development and knowing I cannot sin. A bad deed committed in ignorance is not sinful. The man who knows little, whose being is in infancy, he may do things without sinning, while I would sin in doing these things. The humble and poor live in dwellings that are dusty and dirty. They live, and they are healthy. If I should live in such dwellings, I would sin and suffer. If I am not clean, I shall sin and suffer. For my actions and my conditions of life should be in harmony with the littleness or the greatness of my being.

Condemn not the ignorant and the children of the Devil. Nurse them and feed them and teach them. They need your soul and your mind and your love more than the good and the saintly and the wealthy. They grope in the darkness, and they even know not that they grope. An eternity stretches before them. A better, a greater, are theirs. Condemn their imperfect ways if you wish, but be kind to their souls. You have an advantage over them — you who are wiser, bigger, and stronger. Crush not the spark of life that is humble. Despise

not the poor and the wicked. You shall whip the truth of existence. You shall trample on the man who is a sinner — even as you and I.

I sin because I am not greater than I am. I sin that I may become greater than I am. I sin that I may suffer and learn and know. The Devil is the only teacher of man. Your sermons and teachings may do me no good. They are aggregations of sound, sometimes monotonous, and sometimes musical. The Devil can teach me in a day what your sermons cannot teach in a lifetime. He charges heavily indeed for his lessons. I must pay with my heart and my soul and my blood. I shall refuse to buy such lessons again. I shall know the truth. I and humanity and universe shall have progressed.

Would you call my body, my sins, and the things you do not approve of, error? Did you ever know existence to err? Come! be less selfish. Do not call things the products of error because *you* do not care for them. They are useless error to you, maybe, but they are indispensable error to the scheme of existence.

My body is as great as my soul is. My sweetheart's eyes and lips and hair and body are not less beautiful than her soul. Soul and body are one. The soul is invisible, the body is the visible expression of the soul. The caressing of lips and the mingling of bodies are, or should

be, the expressions of two souls that blend into one.

Were it not for body and matter, we could not know and learn. These things are the instruments needed for the soul to progress. If your only concern is your body, you are in error. If your only concern is your soul, you are likewise in error. Body and soul are one. Without the body, the soul is asleep and in darkness.

Waste not your life in solitude or within the walls of a convent. You shall be unnatural. Nor fear that the world might stain your whiteness of soul. If your soul is pure and noble, nothing can affect its purity and nobility. Run not away from the temptations and pitfalls of life. Have the courage to test the quality of your self. Many a man who had claimed to be something else than man, who had lived secluded from life, in one horrible crime atoned for the many little sins he had refused to commit.

I say to my reader: be natural! Be not ashamed to admit to the world what you are. Be dissatisfied with your self, and strive for greater perfection. But ever be natural, that you may live up to the truth of your being. An honest devil is greater than a dishonest god. A glittering imitation is less valuable than a rough original. Why should you pretend, and be something which you are not? If you pretend

to be a saint, the world expects you to act like a saint. One slip of your stumbling feet — and man has condemned you a hundred times more than he does the criminal who is honest about his crime!

This life is my schoolhouse. My sin, the expression of imperfection, is my teacher. The lessons known to my soul do not tempt me. I discard them as bad and imperfect. The others I read and devour. I drink deep from the well of experience. I pay the price with my heart. If sin I must, I shall sin! And willing I am to pay the price. But to sin against my better understanding — that you can never compel me to do! For if I cannot be more than I am, I neither can be less. And my actions and my thoughts are the expressions of a degree of being-sublimity. Woe to the man whose life is a lie! Woe to the man who teaches that which he knows to be untrue!

Behold my glorious universe! Each happening is useful. Each thing is needed. Nothing is wasted. Nothing is purposeless. I plunge deep into the ocean of life. I drink from the well of tears as well as from the rippling brook of happiness. I deserve both, I demand both, for the reason that I am what I am. My imperfection demands the tears, that I may become more perfect. My work and my sacrifice de-

mand happiness. I shall receive not a penny more or less than my soul-value deserves.

Show me the man who has sinned and suffered; whose tears were the price of wisdom; who rose from darkness into light; whose experience softens his heart to his brother; who knows and can grasp the ways of the world! He, indeed, can speak about the truth of life!

And those who are saintly and perfect; whose morals are printed in books instead of their souls; who preach with a hell against the ways of their god — these people, I say, the devil refuses to visit and teach. They are not good, and they are not bad. They are not alive, and they are not dead. Their souls are the stagnant waters of life. They stand still in a whirling universe of progress.

The world is good and grand and glorious. Everything moves and schemes and is of use. The ugliest thing has a purpose divine.

X

THE UNKNOWABLE

Absolute perfection is unknowable and inconceivable. Relative perfection is known to the human mind. Something may be perfect in its imperfection. A man, as a man, may be perfect; but in the absolute sense he is not. If we could possibly conceive of something perfect, we should know it to be *unchangeable.* If it were subject to a change that implied improvement, it should have lacked this improvement in the first place, and it should not have been named perfect. Perfection now was perfection yesterday, and will be perfection to-morrow. In other words, perfection is eternal in its existence.

Something perfect cannot have any qualities or attributes. To give an illustration: suppose one of its qualities to be height. The very word height is synonymous with imperfection. Height is never so high that it cannot change into a higher height. Height will reach its perfection when it is height no more; when it is immeasurable; when it cannot become higher; when

it is infinite. Man cannot conceive of infinite height. If he could, infinite height would be limited, and a greater height would be imaginable. The perfection of height, then, is infinite height — which is no height to quality-conceiving man. Suppose that magic placed infinite height before you; you would see, and know of, absolutely nothing. You would see that which man names nothingness or emptiness or space. The same may be argued about all measures: length, breadth, depth; and all qualities as wisdom, power, love, beauty, etc. Any conceivable quality is, for the very reason that it is conceivable, limited and imperfect. Perfection, holding in itself all qualities to an infinite degree, is inconceivable. When something is inconceivable, not sensible, it appears as nothing or emptiness to the human observer. That limitless depth surrounding our planet is the expression of perfection. That immeasurable emptiness is the *one* unchangeable something in fathomless universe. It is eternal in its existence. We can safely state that its existence is self-evident. We may be able to think away a flower, a man, a planet, a sun — anything visible and imperfect; but even when all that is is thought away, there remains forever and anon that fathomless emptiness. If there exists a perfect God, I am not surprised to read that " no man has seen God at any time," and that one

can only " testify " and " bear witness of him," and " declare Him." A perfect God is absolutely incomprehensible, inconceivable, invisible. His presence is revealed to humanity by an everlasting emptiness and an eternal silence.

Perfection, moreover, cannot have any human attributes. A perfect something cannot KNOW anything. Even if it knew all there is to know, its knowing-power would be limited. Also to know itself would imply limitation or imperfection. The power to know, then, of a perfect something is inconceivable; in fact, it is infinite, or not-knowing in the opinion of imperfect man. The knowing of a perfect being is another knowing than ours, to say the least.

The power, love, goodness, and wisdom of human conception and comprehension are not expressed by a perfect being. As soon as man is able to conceive of its power and love, these qualities are limited and not perfect. The power, love, goodness, and wisdom of perfection are infinite, and reveal themselves to imperfect man by their absolute absence.

Perfection is unchangeable. Any change would prove its imperfection. A perfect something, therefore, cannot create. Why should something that is absolute perfection create imperfect, changeable things? Moreover, there is but perfection itself to be used as " material " for the creation. If there were any other " ma-

terial" available, perfection could not be perfect. It would lack that "material." From its own self, then, should perfection create. In other words, the perfect would change into the created object or thing; which is impossible, as perfection is unchangeable.

I am mighty glad to have come to this conclusion. If there exists a perfect God, he at least did not create me in a mood of *ennui*. He is not playing with me as I would play with the pieces on the chessboard. I am not depending upon his whims and generous moods. Nay, I may quietly study my own being and its startling laws. I am master in this world of changeability and imperfection, at least. I am, at least, the cause of many a strange happening. I can, to a certain degree, consciously shape my own future. Unconsciously I shape my entire future, merely by being what I am, merely because I exist. The liberty and freedom advocated in our life on earth are but the expressions of universal liberty and freedom. Think of created things knowing such glorious principles, and of a perfect God knowing them not! It would be a sorry mess, this glorious universe of ours!

There exists no ugliness for me now! Neither do I fear or despair. I need not fear the day when sorrow and disaster shall be sent to me by my lord and master. I am free, absolutely free! My only enemy is myself; my only limi-

tation is myself; the only disaster liable to face me is the harvest which my own imperfect self has sown. There is a universe to be conquered by myself. I know little about it now, because my self is little. But when I replace my thought of self by nobility, generosity, unselfishness; when I become more All-conscious than self-conscious; then I shall know infinitely more about All.

I do not care to speculate upon perfection. It has become clear enough that it is unknowable, inconceivable. I prefer to study and improve upon the KNOWN — my own being, for example. Now and here is the time and the place for action, study, and speculation. From what I KNOW I can conclude that man is subject to growth. He is nearing perfection as the years roll by. This growth is the growth of All-consciousness, which is expressed by unselfishness. I see the greatest self-consciousness and imperfection in the electron (or perhaps in that which science names ether). I see self-consciousness and imperfection become less and less in the atom, the rock, the plant, the animal, and man, successively.

If there is a growth, there must have been a beginning, and there should be an end, you shall wisely remark, and this universe in time should evolve to the point of perfection where matter and limitation are not imaginable. But science

clearly proves that matter and energy are indestructible from which we logically conclude that creation is eternal; that there may be a beginning and an end to a being's imperfection, but not to imperfection or material existence as a whole.

But, again, what do I care for superhuman speculations? My being has reached a certain degree of development, of All-consciousness. My knowing is limited; beyond that limit I cannot know; I can merely guess or rave. I should be satisfied to know that there is progress ahead of me and humanity. A greater development of man's being shall bring along a greater knowing-power. The secrets of existence, the laws of nature, shall be revealed unto man. Nothing shall remain hidden.

The end, you ask? What if a being has become perfect, and is absolutely All-conscious? I suppose the being has then reached the Nirvana of the Hindus, the " Christ-consciousness " of the modern religious speculators, the " heaven and bliss " of ancient Christianity. Such a being has then become All-knowing; in other words, it knows nothing. There is nothing to know. There is nothing to speculate upon, nothing to study, nothing to hope for, nothing to become desperate about. There is everything — which is nothing. There is infinite and eternal — which is nothing to imperfect man.

There is a fathomless apathy — no pain or pleasure, no beauty or ugliness, no knowledge or ignorance. Yes, there is perfect bliss, which consists of no sensation whatever.

I, personally, do not now particularly crave such a condition. I am happy in the knowledge that I am imperfect and a sinner. I am at least my own possibility for improvement and growth, which cannot but bring satisfaction. And those fanatics who are anxious to leave this world of "illusion," "imperfection," "darkness," or whatever they may name this life, I wish to acquaint with an undeniable truth. If it were not for the fact that man *is* imperfect, he could not possibly know and strive for perfection. If man and everything else were perfect, there could be no goal, no strife, and consequently no action and progress. Material universe would not exist at all. It is the very imperfection of man that acquaints him with the idea of perfection. This idea, then, is the moving inspiration of humanity. To know that there is a greater, a better, a more perfect ahead, endows us with the power to do, to bear, to conquer and to progress.

Universe to me is a veritable paradise in which to move and live; a paradise of many hidden secrets, the solution of which has been promised me on the ground that I am a man. I, myself,

am an essential part of this paradise, and undoubtedly the most interesting secret to be known. Through studying and ennobling my self, I may know more and more about the rest of universe. Certainly not so bad an occupation — that of being man! A greater, better and more powerful self is constantly beckoning me. A greater understanding of all that is is ever giving me new vigor to proceed. I have no time to be bored or crushed or desperate; I am too busy living. That immense marvel wherein I move, and the possibility of learning more about it, thrills my being with the inspiration of existence.

I believe that religion is the greatest enemy of science and philosophy — in one word, truth. It is founded on blind belief which forever prevents the individual from being original and "finding out things for himself." It makes man prejudiced in favor of his belief; it often makes him a moral coward. It forbids him to gather the pearls of truth that lie scattered everywhere.

I do not mean to condemn the pious man. If his particular being is in need of religion, he should have it. But the word religion has a disagreeable, authoritative sound. And I am of opinion that thousands of men partly yield to that authority, which is religion's first, last, and middle name — thousands of men who are ad-

vanced enough to discard the swaddling-clothes of religious vagaries and superstitions, and accept the ermine robe of philosophy and truth.

But I believe that I am able to understand why man is everlastingly absorbed in God — the unknowable and inconceivable; why he does not interest himself a little more in the knowable — himself, for example. Man's average development in the bygone centuries did not allow him to be aware of, and grasp, the laws of his being and of nature. It is natural to explain the cause of all our life-happenings by means of a Supreme Being who rules the fate of man and universe. It is natural to seek the guiding power, the distributor of grief and happiness, the cause of events and happenings, in a being or power existing separate from the individual, and having nothing in common with him. All this is natural — when we do not know the truth. But man, especially the more advanced American man, is making some remarkable discoveries about his self — discoveries that are of vital interest to successful living, and of incalculable benefit to humanity in general and the individual in particular. He is gradually realizing that he, himself, is the cause of certain effects, the creator of certain conditions and happenings. When he realizes that he himself is, consciously or unconsciously, responsible for the forthcoming of certain events, he deducts

that responsibility from the total responsibility with which he had charged the Supreme Being. He turns to his self, realizing that it has the power to act, to a certain degree at least, independently of the sanction of an outside power. The man who realizes that through his own efforts and perseverance he is able to sell his goods, is on the right road. "God helps those that help themselves" is a popular saying that contains more wisdom than we would imagine.

A greater soul-development means a deeper understanding of the laws of existence; a greater understanding brings along a deeper realization of the truth: I can do, I can create, I can act, I can destroy,—independent of any power existing in separation from me, but dependent upon the quality of my self. Progressing humanity shall gradually transfer all concentration from a god to their own individuality. In centuries to come, people shall conceive of perfection as an unknowable, incomprehensible something that does not interfere with the laws inherent in their own being. They shall realize that religion, the personal-god-idea, the belief in a power existing separate from our own being and ruling it, are but facilitating bridges, preparatory schools, leading beginners toward the sublime truth, that the individual is his own responsibility, his own fate — nay, his own God!

If you wish to call such a statement blasphemous, you are, of course, at liberty to do so. Your opinion, however, is based upon blind belief. The above utterance is the expression of sincere realization — the result of earnest study and sought-for experience. I am convinced, moreover, that man can then only be filled with the thrill of inspiration when he knows that it is entirely "up to himself" to create a noble, beautiful life. If a supreme being were consciously ruling him, man might have reason to say with Omar Khayyam:

"Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd — Man's forgiveness give — and take!"

Let perfection (or God, if you wish) have its existence in incomprehensibility! I will go through life, drifting on the unshakeable knowledge that my being is a creative power. Defeat? I know it not. It is but a new inspiration, instructing me how to conquer. Sorrow? I can bear it. It purifies my imperfect being, and it tests my unselfishness. Trouble and misfortune? Some qualities of my being are markedly imperfect. My trouble is the harvest of the seed that I have sown. I will endeavour

to better and ennoble my self. Yea, in this material world I am at least my own fate, my own sorrow, my own happiness. "The kingdom of heaven is within," and not without,— in the fathomless depths of inconceivability, for example.

Man should awake to the knowledge of what he is. He should realize that his being's value is that of a creative power. It is not blasphemous to know the truth. It is criminal to stubbornly refuse to know it. And to KNOW, I say, is to be master of existence!

XI

CONJECTURES

Death is the most puzzling and the most impressive event in man's existence. Man writes his numerous books on the philosophy of life, carefully ignoring, however, that problem of all problems, *death*. He appears to be afraid to touch the subject at all. He would gladly be able to forget that death is a fact.

The impressions caused by the reality of death are not of the most cheerful kind. They are generally sad, sometimes horrid. The possible existence of a beyond, and thought of self, are the principal sources of this horror. Loss, in whatever form, then, is man's greatest torturer. Death means loss: loss of life and sunshine, loss of friends and beloved ones, loss of possessions and happiness. There exists no torture caused by loss without thought of self. The absolutely unselfish man should be able to meet death fearlessly. It is rather surprising that man bothers himself with no other than his own death. He never thinks about the horrible unknown when he gathers his flowers, or when he

kills his cows and lambs. Is there no beyond for the flower and the animal, I wonder? Is the beyond a privileged horror for man only? Thought of self, once more, in this instance, shapes the ideas and the thoughts of man.

If you should demand an answer to the questions "Whence?" and "Whither?" my honesty would compel me to reply: "I do not know." I may have formed a theory, I may even have a conviction regarding the matter; but neither the theory nor the conviction are directly founded on truth. They are based only indirectly on observation of known facts. Their immediate foundation is conjecture.

Seen from a viewpoint of personal benefit, I care very little about the "whence" and the "whither." My only interest in the matter is aroused by a desire to know the truth. The all-important, all-absorbing fact is: I exist. I therefore pay as much attention as possible to my existence now and here. I refuse to make my known life a hell by creating visions of horror belonging to an unknown life. Neither do I care to waste an opportunity to make this existence a noble heaven by concentrating on bliss which may and may not be my share in a dreamed-of abode.

The belief in an existence beyond the realms of material life is extremely popular. Hindoos, Egyptians, Indians, in fact any race that ever

nestled on this globe — believed in a hereafter. The Christian Church to-day positively asserts that heaven is the dwelling-place for departed souls. It used to reserve a more disagreeable place for sinners and wicked people. But man realized, not so long ago, that God could not be so infinitely cruel as to eternally damn and torture his children whose imperfections were caused by his own shaky hand. Man, therefore, abolished the hell-concept, which is an expression and an indication of bygone ignorance and little soul-development.

The theory of a heaven is based on pure conjecture. It is not even indirectly founded on knowledge and observation of known facts. I am not surprised, therefore, that it is inconsistent and illogical.

Eternity with a beginning is inconceivable. That which is endless cannot have a beginning. If one believes in an everlasting after, one should logically accept an everlasting before. Religion, then, if anxious to be logical and consistent, should state that man's existence is eternal; that he ever did exist, and that he ever shall. The past, however, is of little interest to man. All that interests the self-loving being is the future. Let this future be a world of seraph-fire and bliss! Let selfish anxiety be put to sleep by a dream! The past? Who cares for the past? The explanation that a master

created us from nothingness will do. Nay, our self-pride and our self-esteem consider the after only, and do not shrink under the lashing statement that our origin is nothingness. This utterly worthless origin we accept with pleasure, provided our future be a brilliant one.

And why should we, whose birthplace was nothing whatever, demand to be something in a future eternity? If nothing be my origin, the playful ruler will no doubt blot out my existence when he shall have tired of me. What am I, that I should annoy this schemer of immeasurable plans with my foolish presence?

Self-interest, indeed, would bar logic and reason from the world of true thought. It is self-interest that created this future for man, and did not care more about the past than to have him emerge from nothing.

Lavoisier, over a century ago, proved that matter is indestructible. It is subject to physical and chemical change, but it is never annihilated. A burning candle apparently disappears and changes into nothingness. In reality, however, the candle-substance changes into various gases, the weight of which is equal to the weight of the burned candle. Water may be decomposed into its constituents, oxygen and hydrogen, by an electric current. The weight of the obtained gases is equal to the weight of the water that disappeared.

Matter is indestructible, from which we should conclude that it shall ever exist. Does it require much brain-racking thought to realize that matter ever existed; that "creation" is eternal; that a material, changeable universe shall ever float on the brow of a fathomless emptiness?

Some people claim that matter is not real, meaning, probably, that it is but the garment of a fundamental, invisible universe. But I claim that this garment is as real and eternal as existence itself. Visible appearance and invisible being are two things in one. A change in the garment is a visible revelation of the fact that a change in the being took place. Without this garment, what, indeed, should become of progress? It is the instrument of communication between being and being. My body, with its center of activity, the brain, allows me to be aware of the existence of my being. When I am asleep and my brain is inactive, I am not aware that my ME exists. Yet I do exist. I am conscious, yes; but I am not conscious of being conscious. My existence is of no benefit whatever to me. I cannot progress; I cannot know; I cannot develop, without that much despised body of mine; for this body is instrumental in transmitting all sensations through the intellect to my impression-absorbing ME.

The matter of which the human body is composed is equally indestructible. Body-matter

changes, after death, into simpler compositions. Nothing is lost, nothing is annihilated. My ashes shall partly float on the sun-heated winds of the sky; they may partly become the nourishing essence of the spring-flower; as a whole they shall forever speak through radiant nature.

But what about that strange something, the personality or soul or being of man? What happens to ME? Here is a question which we are loath to answer, but also loath to ignore. We are loath to answer this question because we lack the courage. There is public opinion ever ready to ridicule us! There is religious arrogance ever ready to condemn us!

Very few men dare speak out their convictions. Public belief and public opinion, no matter how imperfect they may be, invariably check the utterances of man, who is indebted to no other man for his existence. What am I that I should refrain from uttering my thoughts — because other people have their particular opinion? I am a free-born soul of universe, and no man can forbid me to think as I please.

On the other hand, we are loath to ignore the question of the personality's destiny. The human mind does not rest until it has found some kind of answer to a life-riddle. Some people are easily satisfied, and content themselves with vagaries and dreams. Others, however, demand the truth, or no answer whatever.

I frankly confess that I cannot swear to the truth of my answer. Only indirectly is it based on observation and known facts. Directly, it rests upon a foundation of conclusions and possibilities. The following, then, is a suggestion more than a statement.

Sleep is a phenomenon which might suggest an idea of the state of death. Contrary to a popular statement, I would maintain that a sleeping person is conscious. I am convinced, moreover, that his being is receptive to certain impressions. The remarkable point of difference, however, between a condition of awakeness and a state of sleep is that the individual is aware of his consciousness when in the first condition, and totally unaware of his being when asleep.

In connection with this subject, I will refer the reader to my chapter, "What is Truth?" I therein explained that knowledge is primarily rooted in the person's being, and should be more fittingly named realization. The body, with its central seat, the brain, is the instrument that causes our being to be aware of itself. Our ME views itself through the brain or intellect, and becomes aware of its own existence and its own knowledge. Without my body and my intellect, I should not be able to KNOW that I exist, although individual existence might, indeed, be possible under these circumstances.

There exist innumerable instances where the intellect proves to be a mirror wherein the ME contemplates itself. When I am awake, I am aware of the existence of my being. When I am asleep, I know neither of my own nor of any other existence. My senses, the brain, and their master, the intellect, have ceased to function.

It happens very often indeed that a person's ME is, partly at least, intellectually unknown. The ME is not fully reflected by the intellect. The individual does not know his self, his knowledge, his capacity, his ambitions, or his powers. He shall act automatically. He shall explain his actions and his viewpoints by stating that "he had to do this and that," and that "he knows it should be so," until a teacher or a book stirs his intellect, and acquaints him with the "why" of his actions. He then knows (intellectually) what he knows. He is aware of his own knowledge. He is more fully aware of his being. His ME is more aware of itself. The teacher has done no more than clothe his realization in a garb of words, whereby the individual received another glimpse of awareness of self.

Our human body-life, then, enables us to be aware of our own existence and our own self. Happily so! For our progress is thus facilitated. While a flower's actions and progress

are purely automatic, ours are partly automatic and partly moved by KNOWING and its brother, WILLING.

Sleep might truly be considered a temporary death. The awareness of self is almost completely gone. We are fully alive, fully conscious, but we do not KNOW this, for the instrument through which we know does not function.

What happens to ME after I shall have crossed the boundaries of life? Shall my ME be annihilated by nothingness? Shall a something become a nothing? Who shall tell? It may be that the realms of the unknown defy all laws of existence, and destroy and annihilate being, which defiance of existing law should cause many a nothing-hereafter-believer to laugh in his sleeve. Then, again, the law of universe might be spurned by death, and man may be aware of his self, even without his sense-body and his brain and intellect. This possibility makes us conceive of a real world, wherein "departed souls" play and suffer, make friends and enemies, and do many things imaginable and inconceivable. Occasionally they would visit their friends "on earth," and inform them that all is well and beautiful "on the other side." Indeed, defiance of all law is powerful enough to startle even the unknown into a swoon.

Our logic — but who cares for logic! The natural course — but who cares for the natural!

Logic and nature should make their exit when our anxious desire makes its appearance. Even if law and logic should reveal a glimpse of the truth, let us by all means disown this truth in case it be less rosy and less beautiful than our anxiety might well expect it to be. A Walhalla and beer-drinking from our enemies' skulls, said the Teutons, rather than the silent but all-knowing law of existence. A heaven with angels and brooks and flowers rather than the wisely guiding hand of the All, say some men to-day; indeed, a hell rather than that!

In the midst of a withering fire of opinion, belief, dream, and anxiety, one stands supported by a lonely reassurance indeed, which tells us that nature never yet erred — except in the opinion of man. And death, also, is doubtless a part of the scheme. If only this scheme embraced our individuality beyond the limits of our birth and death! Could we but rise in our own estimation by proclaiming the eternity of our being as an indispensable part of all that is, as an indispensable factor of existence itself! Alas! our knowledge does not warrant such proclamation. Our known lives are hemmed in by an unknown before and an unknown after. Like bubbles we rise up from a source of nowhere and everywhere, to burst like so many utter insignificances. Our lives are like so many threads — but who cut the threads? Who,

indeed, had the infinite arrogance to begin and to end in a world of no-beginning and no-end?

Eternal change is the characteristic of universe. Eternity itself is change. Everything changes into something else. But not one iota is being added to the whole, not one iota is being subtracted therefrom. Existence is one; must forever be one. This being-one is the moving power of universe. A gain on earth is a loss on another planet; a loss on earth is a gain in a distant corner of the world. The balance is ever kept. A double-handled pump is this world: when the left handle is down, the right handle is up; when the latter moves down, the first is compelled to rise. Existence and its garment, visible universe, are eternal, though not constant.

In this world, wherein all things forever make the same one; wherein all things change without changing the one; wherein all things shift and move and change, but never perish,— in this world, man came from nothing!? In this world, man becomes nothing!

Pshaw! Here is my answer: he IS, he WAS, he SHALL BE.

XII

MY LIFE AND MY UNIVERSE

A SUMMARY

I enjoy my own life and my own universe. Though, in reality, only one fathomless world exists, each being carries in his soul his own particular universe, which is his and his only; for his being has the power to feel all that *is* according to its own quality; and as there exist innumerable degrees of being, there exist millions of different worlds to the millions of souls that people the earth.

When my heart is sad, the star-lit depths of universal night brood in silent, somber sorrow; the flower appears to droop under the burden of unspoken grief; the hall-clock sends its penetrating ticks into the fathomless solitude of eternity.

When I am happy, the stars twinkle more brightly. The sunshine is more radiant. The birds twitter more joyfully. All is rosy and happy. I slap my downhearted friend upon the back, and tell him about the beauty of existence. I picture to him a happy world,— *my* happy world, which is happy because my being is.

As I am, thus is my universe. It is a sad and hopeless world, you say? I do not agree with you. I *cannot* agree with you. You cannot convince me of the truth of your statement. Your being is different from mine. Your soul is viewing the world through its own hues, and so is mine. Your world may have a blue aspect; mine is white and radiant.

Beautiful is my universe, infinitely beautiful. To think about, and to only partly understand, the marvel of All, is sufficient to make this world a beautiful one. Forbid me to think and seek the answers to my questions — and you have forbidden me to live! Even the animal can spend its life in satisfying its physical wants. Man was born for greater things. Sleeping and eating are but secondary factors of his life. And if circumstances compel him to waste his existence in wearisome efforts to gather food, he either is not aware of the power of his being, or else his brothers do not divide equally with him.

Man is born to rule; to rule on the very throne of universe. He can, then, only rule when he KNOWS. Knowledge conquers where cannons can but kill. Knowledge owns where dollars can but borrow. Knowledge rules where gold and glitter can but bribe. Knowledge is the very God of universe!

What monotony to live on earth, understanding nothing about the nature of existing things,

the causes of phenomena and life-happenings! What sadness to be ignorant of the marvelous power of one's being, and to be aware of only an ability to obtain food and pleasure! Know, and through the penetrating eye of knowledge behold a paradise! Your understanding forbids you to see ugliness. Everything is interest, marvel, and beauty. Watch the crowds of the busy city! Each individual carries a world in his heart,— a world of problems, sorrow, struggle, mystery, and pleasure. Each of his actions is the effect of a knowable cause. He is an open book, containing many beautiful essays on being and soul-development; perhaps also some ugly paragraphs written by ignorance and non-development. But you realize that the book itself is not knowingly responsible for this ugly expression; you therefore treat it as lovingly and carefully as you would the most sublime edition of creation.

Indeed, knowledge is the inspiration of man's existence. It gives life to that world of form and shade around me; it gives meaning to the apparently automatic, often whimsical, movements of so-called fate. It tells me that whatever is, is best; which statement no longer is a sentiment of hopeful resignation, but a realized truth.

Universe not only impresses my consciousness with the quality of beauty when I analyze it

intellectually. The direct impression which it leaves in my being is often indescribable. My being is beauty-mad. To describe what I feel when I behold and drink in beauty, is impossible. In such instances I am mute. Words fail me, for the reason that the sensation is almost unlimited and infinite. I cannot fully grasp the beauty of nature and universe; neither am I able to give expression to my feelings. It is for this reason that all real beauty is tinged with a soft, tender sadness. Not with the sadness of tears! But with that unnamable, super-beautiful sadness of unfathomableness. My being yearns to embrace the whole, and is unable to do so. An infinite, tender longing possesses my soul. Experience it yourself; only then shall you understand what I now vainly try to explain.

This sadness of infinity hovers above the horizon when the pale hues of the dawn disperse the dark of night, when the last rays of the sun reflect their blood-color upon the feathery evening-clouds. It whispers through the dew-bedecked, fragrant rose, standing mute and still in the silver light of moon and star. Its murmur arises from the bosom of the ocean-waters. Its soft yearning is heard in the ripple of the brook traversing the forest where human voices do not ring. And I sense it above all, when I stand alone in the stillness and darkness of star-strewn immensity.

Music is but one of the expressions of beauty experienced by the soul. Chopin was the man that knew how to express infinite beauty which cannot be wholly grasped by the soul, in composition. His nocturnes and waltzes — nay, all his music — expresses tender longing and the sadness of incomprehensibility. Each of his pieces of music leaves something unsaid; suggests the existence of an infinite by not uttering it. Each chord and note is not final; each sound-vibration is a beautiful question, exciting an unnamable, tender longing in the human soul.

And in this world of marvel and beauty — *my* world — I live and fight and struggle and hope. I am ambitious. I have an aim in this life. No man can comfortably pass away twenty-four hours daily during a period of sixty or seventy years without having a definite aim with which to occupy his mind. When I happen to be lazy, and lose sight of the goal I wish to reach, I am, physically and mentally, sick. I become self-centered. I command too much time to devote my attention to my many physical ailments. And woe to the individual who has nothing else to do but nurse and pet and please himself! There exists a distinct type of man and woman who are constantly afflicted with this or that little trouble. In many instances, the best cure for the woman is to do some washing; for the man to manipulate pick and shovel,

— anything that may divert their attention from self to something else.

No matter how insignificant your station in life may be, no matter how humble your ambitions are — see a goal ahead! Try to reach it! Each man shall find a life-task fitted to the capacity and quality of his being. And the genius who accomplishes an apparently tremendous task does not accomplish more than the humble land-owner who harvests his potatoes.

My ambition is to bring freedom to people; to liberate them from the bondage of ignorance and superstition; to awaken their souls to the marvelous intelligence of all that *is*, and to the creative power of their own being. I can accomplish this in but one manner,— by sharing my knowledge with them, and by proving to them that this knowledge has been my inspiration, guiding power, and source of successful living.

I do not know why such an ambition is mine. Probably because I am myself. It is a necessary expression of my being. I cannot help being myself. Consequently, if my ambition be a worthy one, I do not deserve credit; if it is an unworthy one, I should not be condemned. All ideas, ideals, thoughts, and ambitions are necessary expressions of our being.

An aim without the applied effort necessary

to reach it, is not an aim. Aim and struggle walk hand in hand. Struggle is the developing power of the human soul. Without struggle and its experience, no progress could be possible. I am a fighter at heart. I do not care to deal out blows, or use any brutal strength whatever. I believe that the man who resorts to guns and the strength of his fist is morally weak.

Difficulties and obstacles arouse the fighting qualities of my being. When the present is hopeless, the future looks bright. When none of my plans succeed and everything seems lost, I am most determined to conquer. I am anxious to prove to myself that my being has a certain amount of creative value, at least. I wish to teach myself how much I am worth as a human being. I desire to repudiate the natural belief that man is a mere puppet in the invisible grasp of a whimsical ruler.

There is no greater satisfaction than to conquer in a fight. I am always particularly glad to shake hands with the man who tells me that he has "gone through hell." To survive a mental hell is to prove to yourself that you are a god. There are, naturally, some people who do not have the power to rise above the level of misery. But those who do, generally emerge from the sea of soul-fire, purer, nobler, greater, stronger.

I do not fear trouble or sorrow. I realize

that a greater regard for my self will intensify my pain. Only when I am unselfish, when I consider my self as little as possible, am I able to bear so-called disappointment and sorrow. I would not care to exchange some years of misery I have experienced for all the treasures of heaven. They taught me a million dollars' worth of wisdom; they proved to me that one can bear, persevere, and conquer; yea, they revealed to me the fact that man is a god in himself, and can rule this planet provided he follow the road of truth to the best of his ability.

I am the slave of nothing — except my work. My work is my very life. To take it away from me is equal to committing murder. My work is the necessary expression of my being. I am compelled to do it. Well-thinking people desired that I should employ myself according to *their* ideas. I did so for a while, merely to please them. The consequences were that I made a fool of myself and that I became sick, mentally and morally. Each individual is guided by the voice of his being. It creates a desire to follow a certain line of work. The individual should obey this voice. If he does not, he is unnatural and he breaks the law of his being. Fathers and mothers should give their children absolute freedom to choose their life-career. Their children are being guided by

the most powerful law in universe — the law of individual fate. This law automatically chooses the conditions needed for the individual. Its judgment is better, even, than that of anxious fathers and friends.

I am nobody's slave except, perhaps, of the generous, noble, broad-minded, unselfish man. I refuse to pretend to be something else than I really am, merely to please people and win their favor. I refuse to hide my opinions, when asked, merely to agree meekly with theirs. A man should be sincere, even in his wickedness and ignorance. I can like a bad man who does not seek to hide his bad qualities. One cannot do more than do the best he can, and express himself as he really is. He then lives up to the real qualities of his being. He is natural.

I have some good qualities, and I think very little about them. I have some bad qualities which I keep constantly in mind, without worrying too much about them, however. I know the law. I know that these very qualities shall be the cause of some disagreeable moments of misery. When the misery arrives, I shall not curse the world, but patiently bear my pain, knowing, meanwhile, that I am learning my lesson; that I am being purified; that I am realizing a truth. Intellectual sermons cannot change my being. The sermons of a hell, mo-

mentarily dwelling in my soul, have the power to make me *realize* a truth, and add a few nobler qualities to my being.

I do not have enemies, and I condemn no one. My only enemy is my self. If I am not aware of this fact, I naturally blame some imaginary power for my misfortunes. The quality of my self determines my fate. Whether I am aware of it or not — I am my own enemy, my own sorrow, my own responsibility.

I condemn certain thoughts and ideas that do not harmonize with the quality of my being. I am not so foolish as to condemn the individual. He may be right, and I may be wrong. But even if I were right, he is not consciously responsible for holding his thoughts. His intellect is the servant of his being, and it merely translates into words and symbols the unutterable language of the personality. His ideas are the necessary expressions of his being. Moreover, I should beware lest a man nobler than I am, condemn me for being what I am. When I say that I condemn no one, I will make one exception. This one exception, maybe, proves the imperfection of my being. I am sorry, but I cannot help it. One particular criminal in all the world I condemn with all my heart and soul. He is the man who, knowing better, teaches people awe-inspiring " bunk " about a personal god, a heaven, and a hell. When a man is sin-

cere in his teachings, I do not care whether his principles are perfect or not in my opinion. He is sincere; that is sufficient. Probably there exist people whose particular degrees of development are in need of such teaching. All religions are but steps leading higher and higher to the throne of absolute truth. Some people, having a certain soul-development, stand on the lowest step — orthodoxy; others stand on a higher step — Christian Science, for example; others, again, stand on the highest step: they think for themselves.

No, I do not care which religion or philosophy a man teaches, as long as he is sincere. But there are priests, cardinals, and popes who have studied too much, who know too much about philosophy — ancient and modern, who realize too fully the truth of everything, to conscientiously teach people about Holy Ghosts and virgins, and drench their souls in a fantastic variety of heathenish nonsense. How the existence of such " teachings " can be possible in the year 1914, is hopelessly incomprehensible to me.

The man who undertakes to teach people of the secret of existence, undertakes a great deal. He takes the infinite, the eternal, and the incomprehensible in his mouth. He influences people with his thoughts so that their very lives are practically in his hands. He should be absolutely sincere in his utterances, especially be-

cause his responsibility is a grave and sacred one.

Kings and emperors may be relics belonging to the past, but so are popes and cardinals. Men who command people how to think and how not to think are the worst enemies of truth, philosophy, progress, and the universal principle of individual liberty. Men who have the infinite arrogance to clothe their utterances in the garb of authority take advantage of the ignorance of the public and are not much better than slaveholders.

Freedom is the heaven of man. To be free from self — from base desires and selfish motives — is to be free in life and the boundless depths of universe. My freedom in life is the expression of my freedom from self. My self is my only limitation, my only devil. May I conquer it, and become the most powerful being in universe! "Know ye not that ye are gods?"

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